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C. K. OGDEN



A
CONFERENCE
Upon the
MIRACLES
OF
Our Blessed SAVIOUR:

WHEREIN

All the Objections against them proposed in Mr. WOOLSTON'S Six *Discourses*, and several other greater Difficulties, are fully stated and considered: And the Truth of the Christian Religion is evidently proved.

By WILLIAM STEVENSON, M. A.
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I think that GOD hath set forth us the Apostles last as it were appointed unto Death. For we are made a spectacle unto the World; both to Angels, and to Men.—Even unto this present hour we both hunger and thirst; and are naked; and are buffeted; and have no certain dwelling-place: and we labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things, unto this day.

1 Cor. iv.

L O N D O N:

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THE P R E F A C E.



BEING the great Truths of the Gospel, and the miraculous Facts by which they were confirm'd, may be view'd, and set, in very different Lights; there is reason to expect various Answers to the Objections that are made against them. So that, I reckon it needless to make any excuse for offering my Sentiments to the consideration of the Publick, after several worthy Persons of greater Learning and Abilities have publisht Their's. When I undertook to answer Mr. Woolston's Objections against our Saviour's Miracles, I did not think myself at liberty to pick out such of them as I might reckon the most important; and to pass over the rest, as too inconsiderable to deserve any Notice: but chose to answer every Objection from Reason or Scripture, that he has urged in his Six Discourses. This has made the Conference longer than it might otherways have been. But I consider'd that Persons of the best Sense often differ in judging of the comparative force of different Objections; and of the various Answers given to them. And I was afraid that some wou'd lay great Stress upon those very Cavils that I might neglect as frivolous. I cannot expect that the new Answers I have offer'd to the Difficultys stated in the following Conference, will be equally approved of by all: but I may reasonably hope that my endeavours to set such important Points in the fullest

Light, will be favourably received, and candidly judged of. I have pursued Truth whithersoever it seem'd to guide me : and was often led into an un-beaten Track, even while I followed what appear'd to me the most obvious and natural way of thinking, upon every Subject. I seldom had occasion to go farther than to the Scripture, for solving such Difficultys as are founded upon the Scripture-History. But I have enter'd into a more particular Examination of the Miracles objected to, and the several Circumstances of them, than Others have done : and have generally confined myself to such Reasonings and Remarks as are grounded on Scripture, Experience, and undoubted Facts. Nor have I only answer'd all Mr. W's Objections, and other greater Difficultys that naturally occur'd in the Progress of the Debate : I have pointed out the most convincing Proofs and Evidences we have for the Truth of the Christian Religion : and have happen'd to enlarge most upon such Observations, as had been overlook't by Others. I have likewise occasionally explain'd (or hinted at) the true Sence of several mistaken Texts of Scripture that fell in my way. But I have no great Names to vouch for any of the Criticisms, except two or three ; which I have ascribed to their proper Authors. The rest are a Specimen of the many critical Remarks I have made in studying the Scripture itself ; without previously consulting Commentators ; or prepossessing my Mind with their Sentiments. I'm sensible that, in some Cases, I may seem too positive in my Opinion : but it is only when I was led to it, by very strong Appearances of Truth, in the Explications I have offerr'd. I cou'd easily have added such soft'ning Expressions, as “ I “ humbly conceive ” ; — “ With all due deference “ to the Judgment of the Learned ” ; — or the like ; which have some shew (and too often a mere shew) of Modesty : but really I think that in our Inquiries concerning

concerning the Sence of Scripture, submission of Judgment is due only to Truth, Reason, and Evidence.

*Since upon every Miracle, and subject of Inquiry, I have happen'd to fall into a train of Thoughts that are generally very different from Theirs who have already answer'd some or other of Mr. W's Discourses; the Reader will not be surprized to find, that on some Points, I have made the same obvious Remarks that occur'd to Others: and, in * one Instance, have chanced to express my self almost in the same Words that are used in the || Defence of the Scripture-History; (in Answer to Mr. W's fifth Discourse;) tho' that Defence was publish't after this Conference was sent to London. I mention this little Circumstance, to show, that different Persons may happen to make the same uncommon Remarks; and even to express them, very near in the same manner; while Neither borrows from the Other. This is particularly true with regard to a very important Reflection, enlarged on in the Close of the Conference; which was finish't before I saw Mr. LARDNER's judicious "Vindication of our Saviour's three Miracles in raising the Dead"; or knew any thing of the Quotation from Origen, prefixt to it; in which the same Remark is partly hinted at. In those few Instances where I have borrowed the Thoughts of Others, I mention them very briefly; and, in a marginal Note, refer the Reader to the Authors themselves.*

I hope none will be offended at the freedom that the Deist and Sceptick use in expressing their Sentiments. Seeing it behoved me to give the Conference some Shew of Probability; it was necessary to make each Person speak according to his proper Character. It cannot be expected that a Deist shou'd always talk like a Christian: or that we shou'd answer the Objections of Infidels, without being allow'd to propose them fairly. They who have obser-

ved the great liberty that the learned Dr. Nichols took in his Conference with a Theist; (and the just Apology he made for it in his Preface;) will own that I have been particularly cautious in this Point: seeing there are but very few Thoughts either of the Sceptick, or Deist, express't in such a manner as to give just Offence to any judicious Reader. The Sceptick doubt's chiefly of the Truth of Revelation; without being able to determin his Judgment either way. On common Subjects, he thinks and talks like other Men. The Deist's Character is very singular. Nor cou'd it be otherways; seeing he is Mr. W's Representative. I wou'd have given him the Title of an Allegorist, which Mr. W. seems to affect: but I cou'd not with the least consistency, or decorum, give any other Appellation than that of Deist, to one who avowedly rejects, and even nauseates, the literal Sence (which all the World knows to be the obvious meaning, or real Truth) of the Gospel-History; and in the plainest Terms calls our Blessed Lord, an Impostor; and his Miracles, mere Cheats, and juggling Tricks. Tho' the Deist's Character resembles Mr. W's, I would not be understood to insinuate that all Deists are of this stamp. M. represents Mr. W. only; not the Deists in general. I'm aware that there are grave, learned, inquisitive, and considerate Deists; as well as scoffing, ignorant, credulous, and superficial Ones. But how-much-soever some of them are distinguish't by their Good-sense, their Learning, and Zeal for what they reckon Truth; they still seem to be influenced by their Prejudices: and do not examin the Evidence we offer for the Truth of Christianity, with that Care, Attention, and Impartiality that they ought. It is chiefly for the Conviction of such inquisitive, and thoughtful Deists; and to confirm Christians in a rational and well-grounded Belief of the Gospel, that this Conference

rence is publish't. I have no reason to fear my being blamed for stating the Deist's Objections fully; and representing them in all their force. For, even the Author of the Defence of the Scripture-History, while he censures * the "unbounded Licence" * Pref. p. 1. that every Writer, both in Divinity and Politics, assumes to himself to write what he pleases; doth yet freely and justly commend the ingenious Author of The Trial of the Witnesses,—for his Impartiality. || "In which [Trial,] he" Ibid. p. 7. "says, there is this Circumstance that must recommend it to Mr. Woolston, as it does to every-body else, that the Objections on the side of Infidelity are set in a much stronger Light, than that Gentleman knew how to put them himself." I have used the same freedom and candour throughout the Conference: being resolved not to leave the least room for charging me with Partiality, or Misrepresentation. Mr. W's Objections are generally proposed in his-own Words. The Deist does not betray his Cause; but argues as closely as he can; till the secret force of Reason seems to silence him; or the hope of more success in other Points of Debate, leads him on to fresh Objections. But tho' Truth is supposed to have some influence upon his Mind in points of little moment; his inveterate Prejudices prevail over him at last. Nor will any considerate Person wonder that Mr. W's Representative shou'd, in the issue of the Dispute, appear too great a Bigot in Infidelity, to be capable of Conviction. This is but doing justice to his Character. There are so few Instances of People's being convinced of their Mistakes about Religion, by disputing in Conversation, that it is not easy to imagin why a controversial Dialogue shou'd be expected to close with the Conversion of the opposite Party. Such a Representation can only show (what will seldom be question'd) that the Author thinks well of his Performance;

formance ; and reckons the strength of his Arguments almost irresistible. It seems more natural, and more agreeable to common Observation, to suppose the adverse Party in a Debate, rather to have his Prejudices lessen'd, than quite remov'd. More real Success than this is seldom seen ; and ought not to be expected. And therefore, tho' our Sceptick (whose Character is fairer, and more consistent than the Deist's,) comes to think better of Our Saviour's Miracles than he did at first ; his intire Conversion is suspended, till his Objections against the Reasonableness of the Christian Doctrine be removed : which was a subject too momentous and extensive to be enter'd upon in the close of a long Debate. Till I see what reception this Conference meets with, I cannot determin whether I shall engage myself any farther in this important Controversy, concerning the Truth of the Christian-Revelation. At present, I'm inclined rather to leave it intirely to the manngement of Those eminent Hands, who have already convinced the World that they are every-way qualify'd for that weighty Task. It is to be hoped that One or Other of them will soon publish such a compleat Vindication of Our Saviour's Doctrine, and the divine Authority of the Scripture, against the new Objections of Unbelievers, as will effectually stop the Progress of those paradoxical Notions, which, with too much Art and Zeal, have lately been recommended to the World, under the inconsistent Character of Christian-Deism.

W. S.

Colwal, the 18th of June,
1730.

The chief Contents.

S E C T. I.



THE Introduction.

Page 1

Of false Wit, and misapply'd Ridicule. 5

No Wit in fooling with Scripture-phrases. 6

How far the Testimony of the Evangelists is admitted in the present Debate. 8

A Distinction betwixt the Truth of a Fact, and the Miraculousness of it. 9

Of Christ's driving the Buyers and Sellers from the Temple. 11

Mr. W's Cavils against this Action consider'd. 12

Of his casting the Devils out of the Madmen, and permitting them to enter into the Herd of Swine. 16

The Gadarenes were more humane than Mr. W. 20

In what Sence it is true, that no Chains cou'd hold the Demoniac. 21

His saying his Name was Legion, is no Proof that there were some Thousands of Devils in him. *ibid.*

The Goodness and Justice of Jesus in this Action vindicated. 24

He only permitted the Destruction of the Swine. 25

This, and his driving the Traders out of the Temple, were Actions that must have been rather popular, than criminal, among the Jews. 28

Of Jesus's Transfiguration upon the Mount. 30

Had the bright Cloud that appear'd been natural, that cou'd not lessen the Miracle. 32

A natural Cloud must have intercepted the Sun's Rays. 33

The Design and Use of this Miracle explain'd. 36

It cou'd not be a mere Vision of Peter's. 38

The Supposition of Magick leads to absolute Scepticism. 40

The same divine Voice that was heard on the Mount by three Apostles, was heard by the Multitude, in a Valley. 42

Mr. W's Objections confirm the Credibility of the Evangelists Testimony. 43

S E C T. II.

Of Christ's curing a Woman of an Issue of Blood. p. 44

Why the Evangelists did not always chuse to record his greatest Miracles. *ibid.*

The

The CONTENTS.

<i>The Woman's Distemper was incurable.</i>	p. 46
<i>How it might last more than twelve Years :</i>	47
<i>And yet not be so bad as to hinder her from coming to Jesus.</i>	49
<i>It is impossible to account for the immediate Cure of chronical Diseases, by the Power of Imagination.</i>	50
<i>Faith was not always required in the Diseased : and is seldom mention'd in the Gospels.</i>	52
<i>Jesus wrought one miraculous Cure upon an Enemy.</i>	ibid.
<i>Of his curing the Woman that was bowed-together.</i>	58
<i>'Tis doubtful whether she was actually possess'd by the Devil.</i>	61
<i>A particular Description of her Case wou'd have been useless.</i>	62
<i>She did not expect to be cured.</i>	64
<i>No possible Account of Christ's Miracles cou'd have prevented the endless Cavils of Infidels.</i>	67
<i>Of Jesus's Discourse with the Woman of Samaria.</i>	68
<i>Mr. W's licentious Invektive on this Subject is intolerable.</i>	69
<i>There is no reason to reckon this Interview, among Jesus's Miracles.</i>	70
<i>Why the Samaritans of Sychar received him, and his Disciples hospitably, tho' there was no intercourse between the Jews, and Samaritans.</i>	72
<i>Jesus readily own'd his being the Messiah, on all proper Occasions.</i>	74

S E C T. III.

<i>Of Jesus's blasting the Fig-tree.</i>	p. 75
<i>It had a manifest Reference to a foregoing Parable concerning the Destruction of the Jews :</i>	76
<i>There being a surprizing coincidence of Time, Persons, &c. betwixt the Parable, and the Miracle.</i>	77
<i>Typical Actions, and prophetick Signs, were often used in other Eastern Nations, as well as among the Jews.</i>	78
<i>The great Patience and Abstemiousness of Jesus shown.</i>	84
<i>What is meant by the time of Figs.</i>	87
<i>Probably the Fig-tree grew on the Common ; and had no Owner.</i>	89
<i>If it had one ; Jesus had an undoubted Authority to blast it.</i>	90
<i>Mr. W's Objection points against Providence itself.</i>	92
<i>The Absurdity of suspecting Fraud in this Case.</i>	95
<i>The Possibility of Fraud or Mistake, is no Argument against the Credibility of well-attested Facts.</i>	96
<i>But all Suspicion of Fraud here, is incredible.</i>	97
<i>The Account of this Miracle, not parabolical.</i>	99
<i>Christ's Promise of giving a miraculous Power to his Apostles was strictly verify'd.</i>	102
	They

The CONTENTS.

<i>They might not always have that height of miraculous Faith that was necessary to remove Mountains.</i>	p. 104
<i>Of Jesus's curing the Lame-Man at Bethesda.</i>	105
<i>Mr. W's Character of Jesus, and his Power of healing Diseases, is equally spiteful and absurd.</i>	107
<i>'Tis uncertain how long the lame Man lay at the Pool.</i>	110
<i>But his Patience might be both prudent and necessary.</i>	111
<i>The Silence of Josephus, as to the Cures at Bethesda, accounted for.</i>	112
<i>They might be wrought in a natural way.</i>	113
<i>No occasion for an Angel to trouble the Waters.</i>	114
<i>A Messenger from the Temple might do it, by letting-down the bloody Water of the Sacrifices, into the Pool, &c.</i>	117
<i>Why one Person only was cured at a time.</i>	118
<i>It is doubtful whether Jesus cured only the lame Man.</i>	124
<i>Several Reasons for singling out him from the rest.</i>	ibid.
<i>The true Design of Jesus's Miracles.</i>	125
<i>There is no Contradiction betwixt St. John, and the other Evangelists.</i>	129

S E C T. IV.

<i>Of Jesus's curing the Blind-Man.</i>	p. 132
<i>The Means that were used cou'd not cure his Blindness.</i>	137
<i>Reasons offer'd, to justify the use of these means.</i>	138
<i>If they had contributed something towards his Cure, it must still have been miraculous.</i>	142
<i>The Pharisees did not object to the Miraculousness of it.</i>	147
<i>Bathing in Siloam might prevent the return of his Blindness.</i>	153
<i>Of Jesus's turning Water into Wine, at Cana.</i>	154
<i>There we find all the Appearances of an orderly Feast.</i>	156
<i>The Presence of Jesus might draw much Company thither:</i>	159
<i>And the Wine be made, chiefly to refresh his thirsty Followers.</i>	160
<i>The Bride-groom's Provision might fall short without Excess.</i>	164
<i>The Quantity that Jesus produced was not too great.</i>	165
<i>His Answer to his Mother, was a just and seasonable Re-proof.</i>	167
<i>Fraud in this Miracle was absolutely impracticable.</i>	172
<i>A Remark upon the comparative Greatness of Miracles.</i>	175
<i>Creating Wine, without Water, was needless.</i>	176
<i>It cou'd not have prevented the cavilling of Infidels.</i>	177
<i>The chief Design of this Miracle explain'd.</i>	179
<i>No other cou'd have been more proper and seasonable.</i>	180
<i>Why the Jews called Jesus a Wine-biber.</i>	182

Of

The CONTENTS.

<i>Of his healing the Paralytick.</i>	p. 183
<i>Mr. W's charge against it is attended with Incredibilitys.</i>	184
<i>It is absurd to suppose the Croud at the Door wou'd make room for the Paralytick and his Bearers.</i>	186
<i>For, none of them cou'd then hope to see him cured.</i>	189
<i>Why his Bearers cou'd not wait till Jesus came out.</i>	190
<i>What is meant by breaking-up and uncovering the Roof.</i>	195
<i>They might have assistance from the Master of the House.</i>	196
<i>If Jesus had cured the Paralytick on the top of the House, or at the Door, the Pharisees cou'd not have seen the Miracle.</i>	198
<i>He previously appeal'd to it, as a Proof of his Mission.</i>	201
<i>This Miracle display'd his divine Wisdom and Power.</i>	202

S E C T. V.

<i>Of Jesus's raising Jairus's Daughter, the Widow of Nain's Son, and Lazarus, from the Dead.</i>	p. 204
<i>His other Miracles shew'd he was able to raise the Dead.</i>	205
<i>Mr. W's grand Objection, drawn from the Silence of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, as to Lazarus's Resurrection, consider'd.</i>	206
<i>They all omitted several other stupendous Miracles.</i>	209
<i>Such Omissions were owing to Inattention.</i>	210
<i>To this Failing all Men are daily subject.</i>	211
<i>The Reasons why the Holy-Spirit permitted each of the Evangelists to omit several important Miracles.</i>	213
<i>The unlikelyhood of such Omissions can be no Argument against positive Evidence.</i>	218
<i>The raising of Lazarus, and Others, is a Proof of the Soul's Immortality, and Existence in a separate State.</i>	220
<i>Which Truth is equally demonstrable from Reason:</i>	222
<i>It being impossible to reproduce the same Conscious-power.</i>	223
<i>Self-activity cannot exist in an inert, divisible Subject.</i>	224
<i>Were the Soul extended, it must still be immortal.</i>	225
<i>Those three whom Jesus raised were as fit as any.</i>	228
<i>The Ruler's Daughter cou'd not be in a Swoon.</i>	232
<i>In Scripture Death is often called Sleep.</i>	ibid.
<i>Jesus only turn'd the People out of the Room.</i>	235
<i>They were still Witnesses of the Miracle.</i>	236
<i>Why he charged the Parents not to divulge it.</i>	238
<i>The Widow of Nain cou'd not bury her only Son, till she was sure of his being Dead.</i>	242
<i>There cou'd be no Mistake in this Case:</i>	244
<i>Nor a Possibility of Craft, or Collusion.</i>	247
<i>The Inconsistencies that attend the Supposition of Fraud in Jesus's Miracles.</i>	248
<i>The</i>	The

The CONTENTS.

<i>The Partiality of Infidels justly complain'd of.</i>	p. 251
<i>Lazarus cou'd not counterfeit Sicknefs and Death, without its being discover'd.</i>	252
<i>All the Circumstances of his Resurrection confirm the Truth of it.</i>	254
<i>Many convincing Proofs of Jesus's being endued with divine Knowledge.</i>	257
<i>No room for suspecting Fraud in the raising of Lazarus.</i>	260
<i>Jesus's Grief and Tears vindicated.</i>	261
<i>Compassion towards Enemy's is an heroick Disposition.</i>	262
<i>The weeping of Alexander and Cæsar was most unmanly.</i>	264
<i>Why Jesus called Lazarus forth, with a loud Voice.</i>	265
<i>How he came out with his Feet bound.</i>	269
<i>It was needless first to take the Napkin from his Face.</i>	271
<i>None of the Spectators question'd the Truth of the Miracle.</i>	273
<i>Why it enraged the Chief-Priests :</i>	274
<i>— And led them to resolve on killing both Jesus, and Lazarus.</i>	275
<i>Prudence oblig'd Jesus to retire for a-while.</i>	276
<i>His undaunted Courage when the time of his Death approach'd.</i>	277
<i>Several Instances of People's not being convinced, or awed by undoubted Miracles.</i>	278
<i>The Cruelty and Persecutions of the Papists exceed the Jewish against Christ.</i>	280
<i>The Jews suspected no Fraud in the Resurrection of Lazarus.</i>	284
<i>Fear of the People made the Chief-Priests secretly seize, and hastily examin, try, and crucify Jesus; all in the space of 16 Hours.</i>	286
<i>Their Officers and Dependents were the People who cry'd out to have him crucify'd.</i>	287
<i>The Multitude were convinced of his Innocence.</i>	288
<i>Mr. W's Contradictions in censuring the Evangelists.</i>	289
<i>Their Character vindicated.</i>	290
<i>Many inconsistent Absurdities in suspecting the Apostles of Fraud.</i>	ibid.
<i>Luke's Veracity and Candour unquestionable.</i>	291
<i>The Evangelists agree; and each supports the Other's Credit.</i>	293

S E C T. VI.

<i>The Resurrection of Jesus fulfill'd an express Prophecy: and was necessary for that Reason only.</i>	p. 295
<i>It was not wanted to give a sufficient Testimony to his Mission.</i>	296
<i>But</i>	

The CONTENTS.

<i>But was design'd chiefly for his Honour and Reward.</i>	p. 297
<i>He cou'd not desire his Disciples to steal his Body.</i>	299
<i>Nor cou'd they have comply'd with such a wild Project.</i>	301
<i>His foretelling his Resurrection is a strong Proof of his Integrity.</i>	302
<i>The charge of Enthusiasm inconsistent with the Supposition of Fraud.</i>	303
<i>All Suspicion of Fraud is quite incredible :</i>	305
<i>And contrary to the Character and Conduct of the Apostles.</i>	306
<i>Moral impossibility explain'd by proper Instances :</i>	309
<i>And an Imposture among the Apostles proved to be impossible.</i>	310
<i>Mahomet's was very promising and advantagious.</i>	311
<i>The Conduct of Jesus and his Apostles was the reverse of his.</i>	312
<i>Had they been Cheats, they cou'd not have pretended to disbelieve his Resurrection at first.</i>	313
<i>A new Explication of the last Error being worse than the first.</i>	315
<i>Mr. W's Inference from the Rabbi's Criticism, a mere Blunder.</i>	316
<i>Sealing the Stone cou'd be of no use.</i>	318
<i>Jesus acted by an Authority far superior to Pilate's:</i>	319
<i>After his Death he cou'd not know of the Chief-Priest's sealing the Stone, &c.</i>	320
<i>(This Supposition not contrary to Scripture, or Reason.)</i>	321
<i>Had he known it, he ought not to have regarded their arbitrary Act.</i>	323
<i>It cou'd not be design'd as a check upon th' Almighty.</i>	324
<i>If Jesus had waited for the coming of the Chief-Priests, they wou'd have murder'd him again, either in the Sepulchre, or under the Forms of Law.</i>	325
<i>His Body after the Resurrection was not invulnerable.</i>	326
<i>It was inconsistent with God's Honour to comply with their demand of having Jesus again put in their Power :</i>	ibid.
<i>And as absurd to expect it, as that he should come down from the Cross.</i>	327
<i>His being rescued from their Malice was as necessary as his Resurrection.</i>	328
<i>He rose exactly on the third Day, as he foretold.</i>	329
<i>'Tis incredible that the Apostles shou'd steal away his Body while it was guarded.</i>	332
<i>The Behaviour of Pilate and his Soldiers shows that the Watch had no Encouragement to connive at any Fraud.</i>	ibid.
<i>Tho' the Watch was bribed to tell a Lye, they cou'd not have been corrupted to be unfaithful, when posted upon Duty :</i>	334
	Unfaith.

The CONTENTS.

<i>Unfaithfulness of Guards being capital among the Romans.</i>	p. 336
<i>It was impossible all the Watch shou'd fall asleep at once.</i>	338
<i>Double Vigilance was required of them at the Passover.</i>	ibid.
<i>The Rabbi's Blunder in supposing Galilean Fishermen might learn Fraud from Herodotus.</i>	340
<i>— And in saying that Matthew implicitly called the Resurrection of Lazarus, a known Imposture.</i>	343
<i>Christ's appearing to the Chief-Priests cou'd not have convinced them.</i>	345
<i>The Incredulity of the Apostles strengthen'd their Testimony.</i>	346
<i>Some Alteration in Jesus's Aspect might cause some to doubt whether he was the same Person.</i>	347
<i>St. Paul's Testimony, concerning some Appearances of Jesus, omitted by all the Evangelists, is as credible as theirs.</i>	348
<i>All the Appearances in the Gospels are consistent and credible.</i>	350
<i>The lock't Doors might be miraculously open'd.</i>	353
<i>Jesus only bade Thomas put his Hand upon His side.</i>	354
<i>He commission'd his Apostles to testify his Resurrection, and upbraid his Crucifyers.</i>	356
<i>Which they did with an amazing Courage and Steadyness.</i>	358
<i>This was a convincing Proof of their Honesty.</i>	360
<i>Their Conduct before, and after the Resurrection, compared.</i>	ibid.
<i>The Gift of Tongues was undoubtedly miraculous.</i>	362
<i>All Fraud here is shown to be impracticable.</i>	363
<i>This Gift was bestow'd only on the Apostles at Pentecost.</i>	365
<i>A great Company of the PRIESTS themselves, (and several Pharisees afterwards) were converted.</i>	368
<i>The Uprightness of the Apostles proved by their whole Behaviour.</i>	370
<i>Neither Revenge nor Ambition cou'd ingage them in any Fraud.</i>	372
<i>Paul's Conversion is an additional Proof of Christ's Resurrection.</i>	375
<i>It was attended with a train of miraculous Events :</i>	378
<i>And cou'd flow from no thing, but irresistible Conviction.</i>	380
<i>His Integrity both before, and after his Conversion unquestionable.</i>	ibid.
<i>It gives the strongest Attestation to the Ascension of Jesus ; and confirms the Testimony of the other Apostles.</i>	381
<i>Jesus's Miracles were a convincing Proof of his divine Mission.</i>	382
<i>Three Marks by which false Propkets may be distinguish'd from true.</i>	383
	All

The CONTENTS.

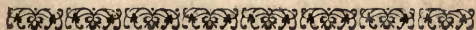
<i>All applicable to Jesus, his Doctrine, Character, and Miracles.</i>	p. 384
<i>Since his time, neither Apollonius, nor other supposed workers of Miracles, pretended to a divine Mission.</i>	385
<i>Nor does it appear that any false Prophet ever appeal'd to Miracles as a Proof of his being sent from God.</i>	388
<i>If Popish Miracles were supposed to be true, they cou'd not prove the Truth of the Romish Doctrine.</i>	387
<i>They cou'd only confirm the Doctrine of the Gospel, by accomplishing the Prophecys concerning false Prophets, and Anti-christ.</i>	388
<i>The Gift of Miracles alone may be a sufficient Proof of a Prophet's Mission :</i>	390
<i>Tho' other Gifts add a higher degree of Evidence to it.</i>	391
<i>The chief Proofs of the Christian-Religion summ'd up.</i>	394
<i>Why the Truth of the Gospels was supposed throughout the Conference.</i>	396
<i>There is no Reason to doubt whether the Gospels were writ by the Persons whose Names they bear.</i>	397
<i>No material Alteration cou'd happen to any of them, so as not to be discover'd.</i>	398
<i>It was easy at first to distinguish the true Gospels from spurious ones.</i>	399
<i>The Evangelists cou'd neither be mistaken, nor credulous.</i>	400
<i>Evident Proofs of their Impartiality.</i>	401
<i>The suspecting Fraud and Craft to be conceal'd under the strongest Appearances of Candour, leads to Scepticism.</i>	404
<i>It was impracticable for the Evangelists to impose false Accounts of Christ's Miracles and Doctrine, upon the World.</i>	405
<i>Such an Account of the Miracles now examin'd, as might reasonably have been expected from Impostors.</i>	407
<i>Those very Circumstances of the Miracles which Mr. W. cavils at, are most convincing Proofs of their Truth, and of the Evangelists' Integrity.</i>	409
<i>The Conclusion.</i>	410

E R R A T A.

IN Page 21. Line 12. *for ease, read ease*--- p. 23. l. 6. r. *cast fix*---p. 31. l. 1. r. *rubicund*--- p. 36. l. 3. r. *is used*--- p. 43. l. 5. *for is. r. in.* p. 49. l. 7---8. r. *wonder at her exerting*--- p. 55. l. 17. r. *extracting it*---p. 119. l. 10. r. *Blood of the*---p. 201. l. 8. r. *appeal'd*---p. 241. l. 34. *for Body, r. Boy*---p. 282. l. 8---9. *for Humility, r. Humanity.* *ibid.* l. 34. r. *spiritual Guides*--- p. 283. l. 7. r. *Men might be*--- p. 336. l. 25. r. *Peter was.*



A
CONFERENCE
UPON THE
MIRACLES
OF
Our Blessed Saviour.



S E C T. I.

M. a *Deist*: T. a *Sceptick*: N. a *Christian*.

M.  HERE is your *Divine*, Sir? I expected you would have been closely engaged by this time.

T. There he is coming a-cross the Court.

M. Has he good Sense?

T. You may guess at that by his undertaking to answer Mr. *Woolston's* Objections against the Miracles of *Jesus*.

M. That makes me fear he is one of those conceited Fools who think themselves fit for every thing.

B

T. You

SECT. I.

T. You will find him a plain, honest, well-meaning Man ; with no greater Share of *Pride*, than those will always be charged with, who judge for themselves ; and dare own that they differ from the Sentiments of celebrated Authors.

M. Is he not a Bigot ?

T. Far from it. He talks very freely, in the Pulpit, as well as in Conversation ; without dissembling his Sentiments ; or thinking himself obliged to espouse the Notions of others. But here he comes. I beg of you don't shock him at first. Pray walk in Mr. *N.* This, Sir, is my Friend, Mr. *M.* whom you have often heard me speak of as a great Admirer of Mr. *W's.* He is much fitter to defend his *Discourses*, and Objections than I ; and has happened to come very seasonably to ease me of a Task to which I should not have been equal.

N. I'm very glad to see any Friend of Mr. *T's.*

M. Sir, your Servant.

T. I expected you sooner, Mr. *N.* you use to be more punctual.

N. Just as I was setting out, I was called away upon a little Business that cou'd not well be delay'd ; else I had been here an Hour ago, according to my promise.

M. I suppose, Sir, you have been *saving* a young Soul, or treating about Tythes. What pity is it that a Man of Sense should have his Studies interrupted with Trifles : and be forced sometimes to leave the most agreeable Company, to go and *name* a Child ; or pray, over a *Christian* Corpse !

T. Such Avocations are unavoidable.

M. Your Case is really pitiable, Mr. *N.* When a credulous Blockhead is busy'd about superstitious Fooleries, he has some Satisfaction in fancying that he is doing good ; or at least dischar-

discharging his Duty. This makes him rise cheerfully in a frosty Night, or walk a dirty Mile, to snatch a *harmless* Infant out of the Paws of the *roaring Lion*. But it must go much against the Grain, when you are forced to break your rest, or leave your Book, to frighten a poor Babe with throwing a little cold Water in its Face.

N. One may give a ridiculous turn not only to indifferent Usages, and decent Rites, but to the most reasonable and necessary Things. You might ridicule the Ceremonies of a *Coronation*; or the *Form* of administering an *Oath*. Nay, I don't know, but one might banter *Temperance* itself; and make *Integrity* appear a silly kind of Thing. The *Fable of the Bees* has made great advances that way; and it is hard to tell where this Humour will stop. Our *Deists* pretend to expose only Error, Folly, and Superstition: But I'm afraid it will at length be thought the surest Test of Wit to laugh at every Thing that is good and virtuous; and to put Honesty out of Countenance.

M. If you cannot bear a Jest, Sir, without growing so very serious upon it; you and I would not be fit to converse much together. Mr. T. tells me you have had Mr. W's *Discourses* in your Hands these three Months: And I was in hopes that your perusing them might have cured your squeamish Delicacy, and reconciled you to Railery and Freedom. If you have consider'd his Objections impartially, I dare say the Eyes of your Understanding are now open'd; though you may not think it prudent to own, that you believe as little as I do of the *literal* senseless Stories you meet with in the Gospels.

N. I assure you, Sir, my Faith is so far from being shaken by Mr. W's *Discourses*, that they

SECT. I.  I have rather confirm'd it. I have read them carefully ; and consider'd every Objection and Difficulty he has propos'd : But I can see none of those *Inconsistencies* and *Absurdities* that he pretends to find in the *literal* Sence of our Saviour's Miracles.

M. Sir, you have a great many Pounds a Year for believing : It is your Interest, and your Trade to defend every Absurdity you meet with in Scripture : And you are *hired* to think (or rather to talk and act) according to the Model establish't by Law : so that I don't wonder at your standing out against the plainest Demonstrations. When Mr. W. publish'd his *Discourses*, he had no more Hopes of convincing the *hireling Priests*, than of receiving a satisfactory Answer from them to his Objections. But if you really think his Arguments weak and inconclusive, why don't you publish a plain Confutation of them ?

N. I fancy it will be safest for me first to try my Strength and Skill in Controversy off-hand. And if I succeed tolerably well in this encounter, it will encourage me to publish my Thoughts. If you please then, Sir, we will spend the Day (as Mr. T. and I had appointed) in examining Mr. W's Objections freely and calmly. And when Mr. T. has heard what may be said on both Sides of the Question, he will either be confirmed in his sceptical Notions, or be convinced of the Truth of Christianity.

M. I'm ready. But you must not expect that I'll be tied up to the dull Rules of disputing : and be obliged to reduce every Consequence I draw, to a Syllogism in *Barbara*, or *Baraliphton*.

N. I'm as little fond of chopping *Logick* as you are. The less Form the better. Only let us keep to the Point ; argue upon clear Ideas ;
and

and use no Word without a determinate Meaning. If we do this, common-sense will readily shew us, when it is that we separate Notions which are necessarily connected; or join inconsistent ones, in any Proposition, or Argument we use.

M. But what if we shou'd differ in our Notion of *Inconsistencies*; and not agree about *Contradictions*?

N. We must then stop short; or appeal to Mr. *T.* who will be a Moderator between us. He must preside in our Dispute; and prevent those Digressions that generally render such Conferences useless and unpleasant.

T. I reckon I shall seldom need to interpose. But if there shou'd be occasion for me to caution either of you against wandering from the Point in Hand, I'll freely use the Power you give me, and endeavour to render your Debate as fair, instructive, and friendly, as I believe you both intend it.

M. I'm afraid, Mr. *N.* you will never be able to bear the freedom I always use in talking upon every Subject. My way is blunt and plain. I call a *Spade* a *Spade*; and, without any scruple, make free with the greatest Personages, or with any Scripture-Phrase that comes patly in.

N. I find, Sir, you resemble your Friend Mr. *W.* in your Humour, and way of talking, as much as in your Notions. But certainly fooling and jesting upon a sacred Character, or a serious Subject, is not only indecent, but shocking. It can never have any good Effect; but is often attended with the worst Consequences. It is contrary to the Wisdom and Gravity of a Philosopher, and to the good Manners of a Gentleman. It darkens the Truth; disguises Peo-

SECT. I.  ple's Characters ; and throws all Things into Confusion.

M. It seems then I must abstain from all Appearance of Wit, as the worst kind of Evil ; and set a watch to the Door of my Lips, for fear of committing a Jest.

N. There is no Jest, nor Wit, in playing thus with the Words of Scripture. If there were, every pert thoughtless Fool might out-do you in your own way. It requires neither Judgment, nor Invention ; but only a ready Memory, a small share of Sense, and a strong bent to Profaneness. I can bear with as much freedom as any one ; and am a hearty Friend to Mirth and good Humour. But still I think there is some Rule and Measure for Wit and Ridicule, as well as for other Things. You cannot approve of Jests that are spiteful, petulant, or misapply'd. Mr. W. himself would not jeer a Judge upon the Bench ; nor banter the *literal Sense* of the Act for settling the *Protestant Succession*, so as to leave His Majesty only a *mystical* Right to the Crown, or a *spiritual* Dominion over the *Hearts* of his Subjects. Far less would your Friend or you talk *plain* Treason at Court ; nor even lampoon a noble Lord by name, though you might fancy he deserved it.

M. Mr. W. and I are such faithful Subjects, that we can never do any thing to make our *Loyalty* suspected : Nor would we willingly fall under an Action of *Scan. Mag.* But if any Lord whatever should pretend to come directly from Heaven with a Commission to be *Lord of Lords*, and Authority to give Laws to Mankind ; I shou'd not scruple to call him either an *Impostor*, or an *Enthusiast*. And if his *Domesticks* shou'd curse and damn me for not believing that he

is exactly as old as his own Father ; I cou'd not but think them either Fools, or Knaves.

N. If the real Pretensions of that LORD you allude to, had not sufficient Evidence to support them, he cou'd not but fall into Contempt : But if he produced his Credentials, and had the great Seal of Heaven to his Commission : If he did such Things as no Man cou'd possibly do, unless God had sent and empower'd him ; to reject his Authority, when so well establish'd, must be an Affront to the Almighty himself : And to treat his Vice-gerent with Contempt, wou'd be the height of Profaneness.

M. But while the Vice-gerent's Authority is in Dispute, he is no more to me than another Man : And it must be ridiculous to insist upon my paying him that boundless Respect and Homage he claims, before I am convinced that he has a Right to them.

N. We will suppose him then to wave his Privileges and Titles, while we examine his Credentials. But on the other hand, you ought to shew him common Civility : And if you will not call him *Lord*, at least forbear treating him with Insolence and Indignity.

M. I'll endeavour to please you if I can. But I am so much used to Satyr, Invective, and Ridicule, that I am apt to forget my self sometimes, and to give Offence to weak Brethren.

N. Most Errors and Disputes flow from the ambiguity and abuse of Words. Every-one almost has a Language, (or a way of expressing his Thoughts) that is peculiar to himself. So that we cannot be *sure* of an Author's true Meaning, till we are somewhat acquainted with his Character, his Capacity, his Humour and Taste ; his Learning, Profession, Principles, and Party. For Proof of this Remark, I appeal to our Weekly Political

SECT. I. Papers; and to all Mr. *W*'s Writings. What he and you reckon *Sheer-Wit*, others think to be mere *Buffoonry*. And what is called *Satire* and *Ridicule* when thrown into a Pamphlet, or a *Journal*, would pass for downright *Railing* and *Scolding* in common *Discourse*. Among the Wits of *Billingsgate*, one may often hear more ingenious *Banter*, smarter *Scoffs*, and finer *Railery*, than we find in any *Piece* your Friend has published.

Mr. Wool-
sten's first
Disc. p.
19.

T. Gentlemen, that we may not lose time in Preamble, I wou'd have you come directly to the Point; and enquire, "Whether the literal
" Story of many of *Jesus's* Miracles, as they
" are recorded in the *Evangelists*, and common-
" ly believed by Christians, implies Improbab-
" ilitys, Incredibilitys, and the grossest Ab-
" surditys".

N. Before we proceed to this enquiry, it will be proper for Mr. *M*. to declare how far the Testimony of the *Evangelists* is to be admitted concerning the Miracles of *Jesus*. For sometimes Mr. *W*. seems to allow their Account of them to be true, and on other occasions he treats them as no better than Fictions. When the Circumstances of any Action related in the Gospels, furnish him with Objections against the Miraculousness of it, he seems to grant that the Fact is fairly stated. But when he finds no room for cavilling at the Miracle, if the Fact be admitted; then he suspects the *Evangelists* of Mistake, or Fraud, in relating it.

M. The Reason is plain. Some Things in the Gospels have a shew of Probability; and there can be no Danger in allowing them to be true: But other Narrations are directly absurd and incredible; and have evident Marks of
Fraud

Fraud upon them. Now these every considerate Man must reject.

N. When you say that the Gospels contain Things that are absurd and incredible ; don't you mean Things, that, if true, are plainly *miraculous* ?

M. I mean — Sir, that is a captious Question. By absurd and incredible Things, I mean Things that are inconsistent, contrary to Sense and Reason ; and therefore impossible to be true.

N. If you can shew that there are such Things related in the Gospels, this will justify your rejecting them. But let us take care to judge candidly of doubtful Things, and ambiguous Expressions.

T. We must judge of the Gospels, and of the Facts they contain, the same way that we judge of other Books ; by the Rules of Criticism and common-sense.

N. I desire no more. Only let it be remember'd, that all the *Evangelists*, except St. Luke, were illiterate Men, who, in their plain artless way, represent Things to us exactly as they appear'd to them. Their Account of Facts cannot reasonably be question'd : because they had a perfect Knowledge of what they relate ; and cou'd have no Interest, Pleasure, or Advantage, in deceiving the World. But we may freely examine whether the Facts they have recorded were really miraculous.

T. Your Distinction betwixt the *Truth* of a Fact, and the *Miraculousness* of it, is just. Tho' an *Evangelist* may seem to have believed any particular Fact he relates, to be miraculous ; that does not determine us. While we admit his Testimony to be true, as to the Fact

SECT. I. Fact itself; we have the same Right, that he had to judge whether it be a Miracle.

M. But when any Fact that appears undoubtedly Miraculous, is related with absurd and inconsistent Circumstances, that is a sufficient Reason for our rejecting such a Story as false and incredible.

N. I grant it. And I hope you will agree on the other hand, that when an Objection of this kind is drawn from the Gospels; and the *Evangelists* are brought in to be as it were Evidence against themselves, or one against the other, by any supposed Inconsistency, or seeming Contradiction in their Account of Things; then their Words, or Testimony for themselves, or the one for the other, shou'd be admitted as equally valid and credible in bar to such Objection: I mean, that we ought to interpret their Words, as we wou'd the written Depositions of other Persons: and let one part of their Testimony explain the other, without wresting their Expressions into Contradictions, and Inconsistencys.

T. That is but fair. And now, Gentlemen, I think your preliminary Points are fully settled. If I understand you right, Mr. M. you are willing to admit the Testimony of the *Evangelists*, in all Things that are consistent and credible; and that contain no Absurdity, or Contradiction in them.

M. Yes, Sir.

T. And you grant, Mr. N. that absurd and incredible Things cannot be proved by any Testimony whatever.

N. Certainly.

T. Then the Issue to be try'd is, whether the *literal Story* of *Jesus's Miracles*, be *an absurd and incredible Romance*.

N. This

N. This is your Friend's *Affertion*, Sir, Let us now examine his Proofs, and *Demonstrations*, as he calls them. If we have time, we will consider all his Objections: So begin as he does with our Saviour's *driving the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple*. 

Matt. xxi. 12.
Mar. xi. 15.
Luk. xxi. 45.
Disc. 1. p. 22.

M. That was a most *astomishing Miracle*, if the Thing was literally true.

N. Let us not confound two distinct Facts. *Jesus* drove the Buyers and Sellers from the Temple twice: First, when he enter'd upon his Ministry; and a second time when he had almost finish'd it. The first Case is related by St. *John* only, who tells us, that *Jesus* then cast out, not only the Traders themselves, but some *Sheep* and *Oxen* they had there. This seems to have had some Influence upon these People: And probably restrain'd them from the grossest Instance of their polluting the Temple, by making it a Market for Cattle. Though they afterwards return'd to their wonted Stations and Business, it is likely they did not bring any Sheep or Oxen again into the Temple. For, when *Jesus* drove out the Traders a second time, none of the *Evangelists* speak of any Thing besides the *Tables of Money-Changers*, and the *Seats of them that sold Doves*. In the first Case, there might perhaps be something miraculous. For since the Authority and Fame of *Jesus* as a Prophet, could scarce have been established when he had but just enter'd upon his Ministry, it seems surprizing that he should have met with no Opposition in his Attempt. St. *John* tells us indeed, that *Jesus* wrought Miracles at the Passover; which was the time when he drove out the Buyers and Sellers. If these Miracles were done in the Temple, or known to the Traders there, we cou'd not then wonder

Ch. ii. 13.

Joh. ii. 23.

SECT. I.  der at their not resisting him. But when he cast them out the second time, there cou'd not be the least occasion for his exerting a miraculous Power. However, since you seem to question whether the Fact be literally true; let us hear a little of your Reasoning against the *Letter* of it.

M. If *Jesus* drove the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple, he must appear more than a Man: And have put on an awful and majestic Countenance to effect it.

Disc. 1 p. 22.

N. It is very likely he did so. But is this any Argument against the literal Sense, or real Truth of the Story?

Ibid. p. 23.

M. It is hard to conceive how any one in the form of a Man, could execute such a Work upon a great Multitude of People, who were none of his Disciples, nor had any Regard for him.

N. The difficulty you may find in conceiving *how* a Thing could be done, is no Objection to the Truth of it. The first time that *Jesus* cast out the Buyers and Sellers, we may suppose (what you cannot reckon absurd or incredible) that they were struck with such a panic Fear, as seized those who came to apprehend him in the Garden of *Gethsemane*. With an awful Look and a Voice of Authority, he

Joh. xviii. 4.

only said to them, *Whom seek ye? — I am he:* And immediately they stagger'd back, and fell to the Ground. Or, if you think there was no Miracle in the Case of driving out the Traders in the Temple; you need only suppose, that they had either seen, or heard of, the Miracles he did at the Passover: And were thereby induced to revere him as a Prophet, and restrain'd from opposing him. The next time they were cast out, there cou'd be no need of a miraculous

lous Power to effect it. They then made but a small Part of the Multitude that filled the Temple. He had just enter'd *Jerusalem* amidst the acclamations of the People; who, to shew their vast Respect and Veneration for him, strewed the Branches of Trees, and even spread their Garments in the way he pass'd through. And the whole *Multitude of the Disciples* rejoiced and praised God, for all the mighty Works they had seen *Jesus* do, and cried, *Hosanna* to the Son of *David*: Blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord. *Jesus* went thus attended * into the Temple, and cast out them that bought and sold in the Outer Court, which was appointed for the Gentile Profelytes to worship in: And said, *It is written, my House shall be called the House of Prayer, but ye have made it a Den of Thieves*: Intimating, that they had profaned the Temple, not only by making it a common *House of Merchandize*, but by the Fraud, Extortion, and Injustice they used in their Dealings. It appears now that the *great Multitude* in the Temple, consisted chiefly of the Disciples and Followers of *Jesus*; who look'd upon him as a great *Prophet*, and the *Son of David*, which was one Title of the *Messiah*. So that there cou'd be no need of his exerting a Divine Power to drive the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple. The vast Regard and Authority he had now acquired, was sufficient to over-aw them into Submission.

Matt. xxi. 8.

Ver. 11.

M. If he had *attempted* to drive out the Buyers and Sellers, the People would have resisted him, and executed their Revenge upon him. Or if he had *effected* it, the Merchants of the Temple might have reproach'd him with damage done to their Wares; and would have justly

Disc. 1. p. 24

* See, *The Miracles of Jesus vindicated*, Part 2. p. 14.

SECT. I. justly accused him of a Riot against Law and Authority.

N. This is arguing from mere Conjecture against plain Fact, and positive Evidence. The *Evangelists* unanimously declare that *Jesus* cast out the Buyers and Sellers; and say nothing of the People's resisting him. Indeed there is not the least Reason to suppose they would. The Action was not only right in itself, but popular too. The Traders in the Temple were guilty of profaning it: And the driving them out must have been agreeable to all such, as had a due regard to that sacred Place. But supposing a part of the multitude had been indifferent Spectators of this Action; the Buyers and Sellers dared not to resist the awful Presence, and establish't Authority of so great a Prophet as *Jesus* was acknowledged to be. His miraculous Power must have been known among them: And if the dread of that had not been sufficient to over-aw them; the Fear of being sacrificed by the zealous Multitude that attended and applauded him, must have restrained them from Resistance. In Fact, he drove them out without the least Tumult, or Opposition: and if they suffer'd any Damage, or Loss of their Goods, or their Money, (which does not appear,) it was but a gentle Punishment for their Offence, inflicted by one who was invested with divine Authority, and vindicated the Sacredness of God's Temple, and their Law.

M. By his Death he abolish'd the whole train of Sacrifices, and other ritual Acts of Worship, that were offer'd in the Temple: And since it was so soon to become useless, and within a few Years to be destroy'd; why was he so zealous against the Profanation of it?

N. Tho'

N. Tho' he design'd, and expressly foretold the Destruction of the Temple, which in due time was punctually accomplish'd; he had Reason to censure and punish the Profanation of it; seeing it was still the proper Place for Publick Worship, that God himself had chosen and appointed. And as *Jesus* always fulfill'd all Righteousness, and comply'd with every Divine Institution: So the Zeal he had for the Honour of God, and a becoming Regard to that Temple, which was not only dedicated to his Service, but distinguish'd from all other Places of publick Worship, by a visible Glory that was the Symbol of his more immediate Presence *there*, led *Jesus* to drive out those Traders (who are represented as *Thieves* and *Cheats*) that profaned the *House of Prayer*, by making it a *House of Merchandize*.

SRCT. I.

Matt. iii. 15.

1 Kings viii. 11.

M. *Hilary* says there was no Market kept in the Temple of *Jerusalem*. And if any Historians, besides the *Evangelists*, had asserted it; I know of none who would have been so foolish as to believe, that Oxen and Sheep were sold there.

Dis. 1. p. 25.

N. This is a tedious way of telling us that you think it a Fiction. Had any other Historian asserted this Fact, Infidels would never have question'd it: But since it is related by an *Evangelist*, they think it incredible. I never took the pains to consult *Hilary*: but the Words that Mr. *W.* quotes from him, seem to be wrested and misapplied. It is very unlikely that he should directly contradict the *Evangelist*. But if he did; no regard could be had to his Testimony, concerning a Fact that *St. John* must certainly have known better than he.

SECT. I.

Disc. 1. P.
31.

M. The best way of explaining this strange Story, is, with Mr. W. and the *Fathers*, to make it a *prophetick and parabolical Narrative* of what will be mysteriously and more wonderfully done by *Jesus*. The *Fathers* are unanimous in this Point: And you cannot reject their Authority, without sapping the Foundations of your Faith. They were holy and venerable Preachers of the Gospel; who receiv'd it from the Hands of the Apostles and of Apostolical Men. Some of them suffer'd for the Doctrine they taught; and therefore cannot be supposed to have had wrong Notions of *Jesus's* Miracles.

Ibid. p. 5.

N. Mr. W. can bring none of those very Primitive *Fathers*, to vouch for the allegorical Sence of *Christ's* Miracles. *Origen* (one of the earliest he quotes) never conversed with *Apostolical Men*. But as to the use that your Friend makes of the *Fathers* in general, I need say but little. Every-one knows what *he* and Mr. C. mean by the *Mystical* and *Allegorical* Sence of Prophecies and Miracles. When Mr. C. asserts, that the *Jewish* Prophecies are true only in a *mystical* or *typical* Sence; he means that they are really misapply'd, and do not in a true and proper Sence relate to *Jesus*, or the *Messiah*. And when Mr. W. talks of the *Spiritual* and *Allegorical* Meaning of *Christ's* Miracles, and rejects the obvious and *literal* Sence of the Gospels; his plain Meaning is, that *Jesus* never wrought true Miracles; and that the Gospel is really an *absurd and incredible Romance*. As for the *Fathers*, I know no Authority they had to explain the Scripture, more than other Christians. Their Testimony, concerning such Facts as they certainly knew, is highly credible. But when they give us their Explications of Scripture, or their Sentiments about any particular Point of Doctrine;

See Disc. 3.
P. 36, 37.



Doctrine; we should approve, or reject them, as Truth and Evidence direct us. How far they were from questioning the literal Sense (or real Truth) of Christ's Miracles, every-one knows. Tho' several of them strain'd their Invention to apply the Facts in the Gospels allegorically; and to show that besides their literal and obvious meaning, they were likewise capable of a more sublime and mystical Sense; and pointed out some farther Instruction, or hidden Truths, which these *Fathers* endeavour'd to explain; yet they never deny'd the literal Sense of *Jesus's* Miracles; nor doubted whether the Facts, or Things related in the Gospels, as done by him, were really transacted. Mr. *W.* cou'd not but know this. And I believe he wou'd not have it thought that it was either Ignorance, or Mistake, that led him to misrepresent the true Sentiments of the Fathers, in the mangled Citations, and false Translations he often gives of them. Numerous Instances of this kind might be produced; if it were of any use. But this Task is already in proper Hands.

T. If you have no farther Objections to the Fact before us, we will proceed to the next. I think there is room enough for doubting whether the driving the Traders from the Temple was a miraculous Act. But seeing there is no Absurdity in the literal Sense of the Story; you ought by your own Concession to admit the Testimony of the *Evangelists* on this Point. Let us hear then what you have to say against the literal Story of *Christ's* casting the *Devils* out of the *Madmen*; and permitting them to enter into the Herd of Swine.

Mat. viii. 28.
Mark v. 2.
Luk. viii 26.

M. I grant that to exorcise or cast Devils out of the possess't, (without considering the Nature of such a Possession; or the Nature

Ditt. 1. p.
32.

SECT. I.

and Power of the Devil,) is not only a beneficent Act, but a great Miracle. But still it is no more than what false Teachers, workers of Iniquity, and even some Artists among the *Jews* have done before. So that this can be no Proof of *Jesus's* divine Authority.

N. After we have consider'd all the Objections you have to offer against the Truth and Reality of *Christ's* Miracles; we will then inquire how far they are a Proof of his divine Authority. We need not inquire at present whether a Prophet's casting out Devils be a convincing Proof of his acting by divine Authority: This is a Point not so easily determin'd as some may imagine: because it is sometimes hard to know when People are really possess't by Devils; and whether such Devils are willingly, or unwillingly, cast out. But there is no Occasion to enter into such difficult Inquiries: because when we assert that *Jesus's* working of Miracles is an evident Proof of his divine Mission, we do not mean his working only one sort of Miracles; such as his healing Diseases; casting out Devils; or the like; but his working *all sorts* of Miracles, as occasion offer'd; the most publick, charitable, amazing, undoubted Miracles; even such as no Power but that of the Almighty himself cou'd possibly effect. So that if it cou'd be proved that Exorcists among the *Jews*, or *Papists*, have really cast out Devils; or that others have miraculously healed Diseases; that cou'd not weaken the Proof of *Jesus's* divine Mission, drawn from his having wrought *all sorts* of Miracles; and even empower'd his Apostles to do the same. Besides; no other worker of Miracles since *Jesus* and his Apostles, ever pretended to be sent from God to reveal his Will to Mankind: and
appeal'd

appeal'd to Miracles as a Proof of his Authority, as *Jesus* did: without which Appeal, the mere working of Miracles can only prove that there are Spirits, or invisible Agents, whose Power far exceeds that of Men. But I need not enter farther into this Point now. Let us hear your Objections against the literal Sence or Truth of *Christ's* casting the Devils out of the Madmen.

M. There are many Circumstances in the Story, that wou'd induce us to call the Truth of the whole into Question. How came those Madmen to have their Dwelling among the Tombs of a Burying-ground? Where----

N. If you please, Sir, I'll answer your Questions separately. But let me first premise, that if a satisfactory Answer cou'd not be given to them that wou'd not lessen the Credibility of the Fact. There are so many Circumstances relating to the Persons, the Time, Place, Witnesses, Occasion, and Effects of every Transaction recorded in History; that it is the easiest Thing imaginable to ask such Questions about any thing whatever, as no Man can fully answer; and thence to form Objections against the most certain Facts. The best Historians among the Antients are often concise in their Account of Things; and mention only a few of the chief Circumstances of any Fact they relate. The *Evangelists* do the same. And tho' this study'd Brevity makes it sometimes difficult to answer every Question that may be ask't about some things recorded in the Gospels; this can be no real Objection to the Truth of them. But to your Question----You ask how the Madmen came to have their Dwelling among the Tombs of a Burying-ground. It is not easy to account for the Actions of Madmen; but it is likely they

SECT. I.  were at first confined, and taken care of, in some proper place of the Town they belong'd to. And when they broke their Fetters, and got their Liberty, Experience might teach them that it was safer to pass their time chiefly in the Tombs, and to live upon such vegetable Food as they cou'd get in the Desert and among the Mountains; than to come near any Town, where they were sure to be chain'd down, and severely beaten by those whom in their raging Fits they might happen to Attack.

Disc. 1. p.
32.

M. But where was the Humanity of the People that did not take care of them, in pity to them, as well as for the safety of others?

N. It was an Act of Humanity to fetter them, and try to keep them from doing Mischief to themselves, or others. Wherever they were fetter'd, whether in the Town, or among the Tombs; they were then certainly taken care of; else they must have perish'd. And when they broke their Fetters; they went into the Wilderness, and shifted for themselves. But according to Mr. W's Morality, the People showed their Humanity, by not killing them; which he says they might have lawfully done. This is but loose Casuistry; and a more dangerous kind of Doctrine than he seems to be aware of. The *Gadarenes* probably had some scruples about the Lawfulness of killing the poor Madmen; and thought it inhuman to destroy them, while there was any hopes of their coming to their Senses again. However, if it was lawful and human to kill them, lest their Neighbours shou'd be in danger from them; it cou'd not be inhuman to let them live among the Tombs, or in the Desert; where they were likely to do least harm: especially seeing the People took
what

what care they cou'd to confine them, and to supply them with necessaries. SECT. I.


M. I think it is hardly credible that *no Chains* cou'd hold them. Disc. 1. p:
33.

N. The *Evangelist* does not say that no Chains could be made so strong as to hold them: but that they broke the Chains and Fetters they were bound with. It is likely the Chains were made no stronger than was thought necessary to secure the Madmen; and that the People's Humanity led them to fasten the Chains or Fetters so (for the Case of the poor Wretches) as might occasion them to be the more easily broken. Now considering that a furious Madman, or one in a raging Fever, may have at least thrice as much Strength, as he wou'd have in a sober healthy State; it cannot seem improbable, that the *Demoniacks* by the strength of Nature alone, (without supposing them to have any additional force supply'd by the Devils that possess't them,) shou'd break such small Chains as might be reckon'd strong enough to fetter them.

T. There is nothing in this Story that shocks me so much as that several *thousand* Devils shou'd enter into the poor *Demoniack*. It is amazingly absurd; and what I can never believe.

N. I know no Obligation you are under to believe it.

T. Is it not one of the Facts recorded in the Gospel?

N. I think not.

T. The *Evangelist* says the Man was possess't by a *Legion* of Devils. And we know that a *Legion* among the *Romans* contain'd generally three or four thousand; and sometimes more.

N. The *Evangelist* does not say there was a *Legion* of Devils in the Man. He only says that *Jesus* ask't him his *Name*; and that he an-

SECT. I.

Mark v. 9.

swer'd my Name is *Legion*; for we are many. If this Answer came from the *Madman*, there is little Credit to be given to it; and less still if it came from the Devil. I have sometimes wonder'd what cou'd be the Reason of *Jesus's* asking the Man's Name; (for it was plainly the *Man* he spake to, when he said, "What is thy Name"?) and I think it is not improbable he might do it to convince those that were present, by the *Extravagance* and *Falshood* of the Answer the Man wou'd probably make, that he was not only beside himself, but really *possess'd* by a *lying* Evil-spirit. And this appear'd manifestly from his saying, "my Name is *Legion*"; as if the Number of Devils in him amounted to some *thousands*! As to the Truth of the Matter, we are at Liberty to believe what seems most reasonable. For, the Answer to *Jesus's* Question, was made either by a *Madman*, who knew not what he said; or by a *Devil*, whom we cannot believe.

Ch. viii. 30.

T. But does not St. *Luke* confirm the Truth of that Answer, by adding the Reason of the name, [*Legion*]; "*because many Devils were entered into him*".

Ch. v. 9.

N. It appears from St. *Mark* that *this* too was a part of the *Demoniack's* Answer; which St. *Luke* only expresses in another way; as if he himself explain'd the Reason of the Name, *Legion*, and design'd to give it a rational and *sober* Sense. We cannot think that by [*many*] St. *Luke* meant, some *thousands*. He uses such

See Luk. i. 1.

Words as *many*, and a *Multitude*, in a very restrain'd Sense sometimes. Thus he calls the *Bundle* (or perhaps *bandful*) of Sticks that St. *Paul* pick't up in *Melita*, *πλῆθος*, a *Multitude*. We never read of above seven *Devils*, cast out of any Person. And if there were six or seven in the

Acts xxviii.
3.

Luk. viii. 2.

mad

mad *Demoniack*, it might be truly said that *many* (indeed too many) *Devils were entred into him*. This reducing the Number of Devils does not affect the Miracle in dispossessing them. For it was as real an Instance and Proof of *Christ's* divine Power to cast out *six* Devils out of the *Demoniack*, as *six thousand*.

M. The worst of the Story is, it is not credible that there was any Herd of Swine in that Country, for the Devils to enter into. The *Jews* were forbidden to eat Swine's Flesh; or so much as to keep Swine in their Country.

N. If the Owners of the Swine were supposed to be *Jews*, (as your Objection implys) it cannot be thought incredible that they shou'd act contrary to a Law that was not of divine authority. By the Law of *Moses* they were forbidden indeed to *eat* Swine's Flesh: but it was only a political Law, or human Institution that prohibited their keeping Swine. Indeed that very Law supposes that the Practice of feeding Swine for neighbouring Markets was already begun among some of the *Jews*. But perhaps the Owners of the Swine were Apostate *Jews* who lived among the *Gadarene-Gentiles* in the Neighbourhood of *Judæa*.

M. I'll suppose what you say to be true: but then it is unlikely (without better Reason than we are appriz'd of) that *Jesus* wou'd permit the Devils to enter into a Herd of Swine to their Destruction. Where was the Goodness, and the Justice of his doing so?

N. There might have been several just and good Reasons for his permitting this that we are not apprized of. Perhaps *Jesus* permitted this Damage to be done to the Owners of the Swine to punish them for some particular Wickedness. And perhaps the Swine might be subject to

SECT. I.  some sort of Distemper; as in such hot Countrys it often happens to Cattle and other Quadrupeds: so that eating the Flesh of these Swine might have proved fatal to the People: and their Destruction perhaps saved the Lives of many Persons.

Disc. I. p.
34

M. I have as much right to suppose what I please as you. Now I think it is far more likely that the Swine were fat and sound, and fit for the Market: and then they cou'd not be worth less than 2000 Pounds. At this rate of reckoning, the Proprietors of the Swine were great sufferers; and we do not read that *Jesus* made them amends; or that they deserved such usage at his Hands. It is commonly said of him, (and I believe it,) that his Life was intirely innocent: that his Actions were all useful and beneficial to Mankind: and that he did no wrong to any one. But how can this be rightly said of him, if this Story be *literally* true?

N. Since his Life was intirely innocent; and his other Miracles were evidently useful and beneficial to Mankind; we ought to conclude that his Conduct was uniformly just and good. And therefore we have *Reason* to suppose that his permitting the Devils to destroy the Swine was either an act of *Kindness*, as it must have been if he knew they were diseased; or an act of *Justice*, design'd as a Punishment to the Owners; who, (whether they were Apostate *Jews*, or Native *Gentiles* of *Gadara*, subject to Idolatry, and perhaps to the other gross Sins that were common among the Heathen Nations;) cou'd not but deserve a severer Punishment than they now suffer'd. In the general Course of his Behaviour, *Jesus* acted like a private Person: He submitted to human Laws; and showed a strict regard to the common Rules of Right and Property.

perty. But seeing these may in some extraordinary Cases be warrantably broke thro', as in War, publick Danger, and Self-defence; we cannot deny the same Priviledge to *Jesus*, in those few Instances where he acted (and is to be consider'd) not as a private Person; but as a *Prophet*, immediately commission'd and empower'd by God himself, the supreme Proprietor of all Things, to vindicate the Honour of his Laws; and to punish a sinful People. Being appointed Lord of the Creation, he had an undoubted Authority over all Persons. The miraculous Power he daily displayed was a sufficient Proof of that Authority. And tho' on other Occasions he made a kind and merciful use of it: yet in this one case, he showed that his Power was unlimited: and that he was able to afflict and punish the wicked, as well as to do good to those that were better disposed. In fine, it were as reasonable to charge *Peter* with murdering *Ananias* and *Sapphira*, as to tax *Jesus* with Injustice for inflicting (I mean permitting the Devils to inflict) a far less Punishment upon the *Gadarenes*.

See Acts ii.
36.
Heb. iii. 2.
Ch. i. 2:

M. You may view this Action in what Light you please: I can make nothing of it but a manifest Injury done to the poor Sufferers.

N. They might suffer Dammage without having any Injury done to them. And if it were an Injury, it cou'd not be justly charged upon *Jesus*; but only upon the Devils who devised and did it.

M. But *Jesus* concurr'd in it. They cou'd not have done it without his Permission: and therefore he was at least *accessary* to it.

N. Is every Person answerable for all the Evil he might prevent if he wou'd?

M. I think so.

N. Cou'd

SECT. I.

 N. Cou'd not Almighty God prevent many of the Injurys, Sins and Miserys that happen in the World?

M. I don't know. It is generally suppos'd that he might.

N. Is he then accessary to all the Sins, and Injurys that he does not prevent?

M. I must not say that.

N. You will grant then, that by permitting the Devils to enter into the Herd of Swine, *Jesus* was no more Author of any Injury or Dammage they did, by destroying them; than God himself was Author of the Injury that the same Devils did to the two Men by entering into them, and abusing them miserably: which they cou'd not have done without the divine Permission.

T. I think there is great difference between a *tacit* Permission, or Connivance, and an *express* Leave; which implys not only a *Consent*, but some degree of Approbation. When the Devils ask't *Jesus's* leave to go into the Herd of Swine, he said to them, *Go*. So that they had his *Consent* to what they did; and I think, his *Approbation* too: for he wou'd not expressly consent to a Thing he did not approve of.

N. What the Devils beg'd of *Jesus* was, that he wou'd permit them to go into the Herd of Swine: so that when he said, *Go*; he only consented to permit them; or not to oppose their Design. Accordingly St. *Mark* says, that he gave
 Ch. v. 13. *them leave*: and St. *Luke* that he suffer'd them;
 Ch. viii. 32. or consented, not to hinder them. Now such a consent is always suppos'd in every Permission, whether *tacite*, or *express't*: when God permits any Injury, or Sin, that he foresees, and cou'd prevent if he wou'd; he only suffers the Agent, or Sinner, to do the injurious Acti-

on:

on: he consents to the Existence of that Event, by not preventing it: but this consent does not imply his Approbation of it. All the difference betwixt such a *tacite* Permission, and *express* leave is this; that a *tacite* (or silent) Permission always implys the Party's Knowledge and presum'd Consent as to the Existence of the Act, or Event, and his Power to hinder it, if he wou'd; (else it cou'd be no Permission at all:) and the *express* Leave, or formal Consent, is the same assent of the Mind signify'd or express't by Words. There is nothing more real or positive in the one, than in the other; and no degree of Approbation *necessarily* imply'd in either. The Reason why some fancy there is a greater difference than there really is betwixt a *tacite* Permission, and an *express* Consent, is, because a Consent express't in Words *generally* implys an Approbation of the Action, as well as the permitting it to be done. But it is not so *always*. Nor is this more than sometimes happens in a *tacite* Permission. For there may be such a *tacite* Consent to an Action as includes an Approbation of it. And a formal Consent may be given in Words to an Action that we do not approve of. But then the *express* Permission relates only to the Liberty of the Agent, and the Existence of the Action; which the Person consenting agrees not to hinder, or prevent. Thus when *Jesus* said to *Judas*, *what thou doest* (or art about doing) *do quickly*; he cou'd not be suppos'd to approve of *Judas*'s betraying him: but the consent he here express't was only a bare Permission, which imply'd an Assurance, that he wou'd not hinder the Execution of his ill Design; tho' he cou'd easily have hinder'd it. Thus too in the Case of *Ahab* and his false Prophets, when a Spirit is

Joh. xiii. 27.

1 King. xxii. 19.

repre-

SECT. I. represented by *Micaiah* standing before the Lord, as offering himself to go forth, and be a *lying* (or deceiving) Spirit in the Mouth of *Abab's* Prophets; the Lord said *thou shalt* (or rather, *thou wilt*) persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so. Here the Almighty is represented as consenting to the lying Spirit's design to deceive *Abab*: and even as employing him in it. And yet the plain Intent and Meaning of this *Vision*, or *Parable*, is only to shew that the Lord permitted *Abab's* Prophets to deceive him. Now, as the Lord's saying to the lying Spirit *go forth and do so*, does not imply his Approbation of the Deceit, but only his Consent to permit it, or not to hinder it: so Christ's bidding the Devils *go* (when they ask't his leave to enter) into the Herd of Swine, does not necessarily imply his *Approbation* of the act; but his mere *Permission* of it. However, if he had *proposed* it; or by any immediate Act of his own had destroyed the Swine, he might have lawfully done it, as I observed before: or have inflicted any greater Punishment upon the *Gadarenes*, that Justice and Wisdom might direct.

DISC. I. P.
38.

M. When our Saviour was brought before *Pilate* to be arraign'd, try'd, and condemn'd, *Pilate* put this Question to the *Jews*, saying, *What Evil hath he done?* If both, or either of the Storys we have examin'd had been literally true of *Jesus*, there had been no need of false Witnesses against him. The Merchants of the Temple were at hand to have sworn that he was the Author of an Uproar and Riot against Law and Authority. And the Swine-herds of the *Gadarenes* might have depos'd that they had lost 2000 Swine through his Fascinations. But for this Reason, if no other, that no such Crimes were laid to his Charge, I believe little or nothing

thing of either of the seemingly miraculous Storys before us.

N. If either of these Actions had been disagreeable to the *Jews*; and just Matter of Complaint against *Jesus*; it wou'd have been in vain for them to have charg'd him with such Offences as were not *Capital*. They were resolv'd to put him to Death: and because they cou'd not justly lay any capital Crime to his charge; they sought for false Witnesses against him; and were forc'd at last to make his owning himself to be the *Messiah*, or the Son of God, a Crime, and the Cause of his Condemnation. But there was so little Reason to expect any such Accusation as you imagin wou'd be brought against him; that if he had thought fit to make any Defence for himself, or any Apology for his Conduct; he cou'd not have done it more effectually, than by pleading the merit of those very two Actions, for which Mr. *W.* absurdly thinks he might have been accused. Nothing cou'd be more reasonable, and fit, and popular too, than his driving out those Buyers and Sellers who prophan'd the Temple of God, by making it a House of Merchandise. And his consenting to let the Devils destroy a great Herd of *Swine* that were an *Abomination* to the *Jews* cou'd not be reckon'd any Offence at all. Cou'd they impute it to him for a Crime, that he vindicated the Sacredness of their Temple; and acted according to their Law in discouraging and punishing those that profaned it? Or cou'd their Law condemn him for consenting to the Destruction of those *unclean* Creatures which it did not permit them to use? These are absurd and inconsistent Suppositions.

Isa. lxvi. 3.
17.

Lev. xi. 7.
Deut. xiv. 8.

SECT. I.



T. Mr. M. have you any other Objection to propose against the literal Sense of this Miracle?

M. No, Sir, I have shown you that it is clog'd with insuperable Difficultys.

Matt. xvii. 1.

Mark ix. 2.

Luk. ix. 28.

T. Well; the Miracle of *Christ's* Transfiguration on the Mount is next to be consider'd.

Disc. 1. p.

40.

M. That is the darkest and blindest Story of the whole Gospel; which a Man can neither make head nor foot of. We must not say there is nothing in the *letter* of this Story, because St. *Peter* tells us, he was an Eye-witness of *Jesus's* Majesty; and saw his Glory on the Mount; and heard the Voice out of the Cloud. But what do Divines mean by his *Transfiguration*?

Luk. ix. 29.

N. They mean what the *Evangelists* relate; that his Face shone as the *Sun*: so that the very fashion of his Countenance [*τὸ εἶδος τῆ προσώ- πης αὐτοῦ*, the *Form* (or *Appearance*) of his Person,] was alter'd: and that his Raiment was not only *white as the Light* itself, but *shining* and *glistening*.

M. And do you think this is enough to demonstrate that Transaction a *miraculous* Transfiguration?

N. The Miracle did not consist merely (nor chiefly) in the glorious Appearance of *Christ's* Person; but likewise in the Voice that came from Heaven; and in the appearing of *Moses* and *Elias* in Glory; and their talking with *Jesus*. But I think the Change of his outward Form was truly miraculous.

Disc. 1. p.

42.

M. Every Philosopher knows that the Reflection of the Rays of Light will change the Appearance of Colours, and to none more than Whiteness. And *Scepticks* will say it is no wonder

der if the Countenance of *Jesus* look't *rubicun'd* when the Sun might shine upon it. SECT. I.

N. The lowest Notion that we can suppose the Apostles had of this Transfiguration of *Jesus* is, that his Countenance and Raiment, and his whole outward *Appearance* was so alter'd as to seem very different from what it had ever done before. They must often have seen the Sun shining both upon his Face, and his Cloaths. Such a very common thing cou'd not have surprized them. And if his glorious Appearance on the Mount had had no more in it, they cou'd not possibly have called this a *Transfiguration*; nor have used the Epithets of exceeding *white*, *shining*, and *glistening*. Any-one that has common-sense must perceive a vast difference between the Sun's shining upon the Face of *Jesus*; and his Face's shining as the Sun, with a dazzling Lustre and Splendour.

See Exod.
xxxiv. 29,
30.
Disc. i. p.
45.

M. But why cou'd not this Miracle have been wrought in the Valley as well as upon a Mountain; whether *Jesus* and his Apostles went up to work it? Infidels will say it was for the Advantage of a Cloud (which often moves or rests on the Tops of Mountains) to play his pranks in.

N. On this occasion *Jesus* did only what was usual for him. He often retired to a Mountain to pray. And St. Luke tells us that he did so now: and that *as he prayed, the Fashion of his Countenance was alter'd*. But of what use cou'd a Cloud have been to *Jesus* in his *Transfiguration*? It must have intercepted the Rays of the Sun, and hinder'd the Reflection of them from his Face and Raiment; which you think was the Cause of their *shining*.

See Matt.
xiv. 23.
Luk. vi. 12.
Joh. vi. 15.

M. We find in Fact however, that a bright Cloud over-shadowed him and his Disciples: Matt. xvii. 5.
and

SECT. I. and this is reckon'd a part of the Miracle ; tho' we see bright Clouds every Day without the least Wonder or Surprize.

Matt. xvii.
27.

N. If that bright Cloud were supposed to be no other than what is common and natural, this cou'd not lessen the Miracle. For, if in any miraculous Event we suppose a Concurrence of some natural Cause, or Circumstance ; the very Knowledge of that *secret* Cause, or Circumstance must be supernatural. For instance, if we suppose the Piece of Money that *Peter* found in the Mouth of the Fish, to have been a coin'd Piece that the Fish had accidentally met with and swallowed, (for I see no Necessity of imagining it to have been miraculously created ;) this cou'd not hinder that Transaction from being a real Miracle : because it was as sure a Proof of a divine Power and supernatural Knowledge in *Jesus* to know that the Piece of Money was in the Mouth of the Fish ; and that the Fish was then present, and wou'd be caught on *Peter's* Hook ; as if there had been no Concurrence at all of any natural Cause, or Accident, in this Transaction. In like manner if the bright Cloud that over-shadowed the Disciples had been natural, (which there is no Reason to think,) and that *Jesus*, when he went up to the Mountain, knew that such a Cloud wou'd happen to come over the Disciples, at the very time when *Moses* and *Elias* were talking with him ; the Transaction itself wou'd still be undoubtedly miraculous : since without having Recourse to the divine Power, it is impossible to account for the Transfiguration or glorious Appearance of *Jesus*, the distinct Voice coming down thro' the Cloud ; and the Presence of *Moses* and *Elias* talking with him. I cannot but observe that there cou'd be no room for suspecting

suspecting any Pranks (as you call them) or juggling Tricks here: For, as any natural Cloud wou'd rather have hinder'd, than help't to produce, the glorious *Form* in which *Jesus* appeared on this occasion; so the bright Cloud that the *Evangelist* speaks of, (whether it was natural, or not) did not appear till after the Disciples had seen not only the *Glory of Jesus*, but *Moses* and *Elias* too; whom they *heard*, as well as *saw* talking with him.

M. You will give me leave to observe in my turn, that the Disciples did not hear the Voice till they were overshadow'd by the Cloud; and so frightened, that they probably knew not what they heard, nor whence the Voice came. We know that in these our Days, some jugglers are strange Artists at the Imitation of a Voice; and can make it seem to come from afar off, when it is utter'd close by us.

Disc. i. p.
41.

N. Every part of *Jesus's* Conduct was the farthest imaginable from all Appearance of Fraud and Imposture: so that none can suspect him of any such Thing, but those who are influenced by Malice, or the grossest Prejudices. We cannot wonder that the Disciples were afraid when they enter'd into the Cloud, and heard an awful Voice pronounce these Words; *this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased*: the very same Words and divine Voice that came from Heaven, at his Baptism; where there was neither *Mountain*, nor *Cloud*. But whatever Aw and Dread the Apostles had upon them, they cou'd not possibly be mistaken as to the Words they heard; and the place that the Voice came from. It came *out of* (or, *down through*) the Cloud. And St. *Peter* who heard the Voice himself, and best knew how to describe it, assures us, that it came *from Heaven*. Nor is

Matt. iii. 16,
17.

SECT. I. there any difficulty in conceiving that the divine Voice might be plainly perceived to *descend* from Heaven, *through* the bright glorious Cloud that overshadowed them. St. *Peter's* Words are very remarkable: “ For we have not fol-
 2 Pet. i. 16, low’d cunningly devysed Fables, when we
 17, 18. “ made known unto you the Power and Co-
 “ ming of our Lord *Jesus Christ*; but were Eye-
 “ witnesses of his Majesty. For he received
 “ from God, the Father, Honour and Glory,
 “ when there came such a Voice to him *from*
 “ the excellent Glory; *this is my beloved Son in*
 “ *whom I am well pleased*. And this Voice which
 “ came from Heaven, we heard when we were
 “ with him on the holy Mount”. But it was
 not this miraculous Voice only that the Apostles
 heard; but the Voices likewise of *Moses* and
Elias, whom they saw in their Glory, while
 they talk’t with *Jesus*. So that there cou’d be
 no Possibility either of Fraud, or Mistake, in this
 Transaction.

Disc. I. p. 44. M. Was it in their own proper Persons that
Moses and *Elias* appear’d? Or were there only
 two Spectres or Apparitions in resemblance of
 them?

N. There is no reason to doubt, but the
 Persons whom the Apostles saw were *Moses*
 and *Elias* themselves. We know not what par-
 ticular Form they had: nor cou’d it be of any
 use to know it. For it is not the *Body*, or
 outward Form, but the Soul, that constitutes
 the *Person*. And *whatever* outward Form the
 Spirits of *Moses* and *Elias* assumed, they must
 still have been the very *same* individual *Persons*.
 St. *Luke* tells us that they *appeared in Glory*:
 and that is all that we know of the Matter.

M. It

M. It is said they were talking with *Jesus* : what then did they talk about? The three greatest Prophets and Philosophers of the Universe cou'd not possibly meet and confer together, but on the most sublime, useful and edifying Subject. It is strange that the Apostles who overheard their Discourse, did not transmit it to Posterity for our Edification and Instruction.

SECT. I.
Disc. 1. p.
44

N. No doubt the dayly Discourses of *Jesus* himself were upon very sublime, useful, and edifying Subjects : and yet the *Evangelists* have recorded but very few of them : scarce so much in all, as he might have utter'd in two or three Hours. We cannot wonder then that they have not related the Discourse that *Jesus* had with *Moses* and *Elias*. It is probable that it concern'd *himself* only. For St. *Luke* tells us they talk't of his *Departure* (or *Exit*) which he was, in due time, to accomplish at *Jerusalem*. When he was in his Agony in the Garden, an *Angel* was sent to him from Heaven to strengthen and support him. And it is not unlikely that it was partly with the same view that *Moses* and *Elias* now appeared to him ; to prepare, animate, and encourage him to go thro' the terrible Scene of Sufferings he was to undergo at his Death ; in hopes of that transcendent Honour and Glory of which he had a Pledge and Foretaste, at his Transfiguration.

Luk. xxii.
43

M. Our Translators have mistaken the meaning of St. *Luke*'s Words ; *ἔλεγον τὴν ἐξοδὸν αὐτοῦ ἣν ἐμελλε πληροῦν* — which wou'd be a Barbarism, if they signify'd (according to our Translation) that *they spake of his Decease which he shou'd accomplish* — you must therefore look for a more proper Construction of the *Evangelist*'s Words ; or we must remain quite in the dark as to the

Disc. 1. p.
44

SECT. I. Subject that *Moses* and *Elias* talk't with *Jesus* about.

2 Pet. i. 15,
14.

N. Ἐξόδος is not us'd not only by St. *Peter*, but by several other Writers, to signify *Death*, or a *departing* out of the World. And it is with a singular Propriety here apply'd to *Jesus*; because it seems to allude both to his *Death*, and his *Ascension*; to his *Departure* out of this *Life*, and his *Deliverance* from the Sufferings he was to accomplish, (or *finish*) at *Jerusalem*; and to his *Departure* out of the *World*, at his *Ascension* into *Glory*. St. *Luke*'s Words might be strictly render'd thus; *they* (viz. *Moses* and *Elias*) *describ'd* [the Circumstances of] *his Departure*, which he was to accomplish at *Jerusalem*. In this Sense λέγειν is us'd by St. *Paul*, in *Rom.* iv. 6. and even in the common Signification, the correctest Writers use it with an Accusative, as the *Evangelist* does. I think ἔξοδος shou'd be render'd rather by [*Departure*] than [*Decease*]; because it equally comprehends the *Death* of *Jesus*, and his *Ascension* into *Heaven*: which was probably now represented and *described* to him in the strongest manner, both by the *Glory* of his *Transfiguration* itself, and by the discourse of *Moses* and *Elias*; that by having *the Joy* and *Glory* of his *Exaltation* set before him, he might be the more encourag'd and enabled resolutely to *endure the Cross*, and *despise the Shame* of those Sufferings he was to accomplish and go through.

Heb. xii. 2.

Disc. i. p.
44.

M. But what was the particular Use and Reason of this Miracle? Was it a Miracle only for the sake of a Miracle?

N. Tho' it might be chiefly design'd for the sake of *Jesus* himself; yet it tended to the same end that other Miracles did; namely to prove the Truth of his divine Mission. *Moses* and *Elias* appear'd to bear Testimony to him, and



to do him Honour. Besides, it cou'd not but help to remove or lessen the Prejudices of the Apostles in favour of the *Mosaick* Law, when they heard *Christ's* divine Authority confirm'd by the Voice of God himself, in the Presence of those two Prophets. And it is very remarkable that those particular Words of *Moses's* Prophecy concerning the *Messiah*, *Ye shall hear him*, were in the hearing of *Moses* himself apply'd to *Jesus*, by a divine Voice that solemnly acknowledg'd him to be that Prophet whom *Moses* foretold; the *Messiah*, or beloved *Son of God*; and commanded us to *HEAR HIM*.

Deut. xviii.
15.

T. Perhaps it may not be fit for a Moderator to appear as a Party in your Dispute: but if I may venture to give you my Sentiments of the Matter; I cannot but think the whole Story has very much the Air of those *Dreams* and *Visions* that the Prophets and other devout People had of old. *Peter* was particularly fit for *Visions*.

We have a remarkable one of his in the *Acts*.

Ch. x. 9.

He went up on the House top to pray: and falling into a Trance, he had a very lively *Vision*; and a *natural* one too, considering how hungry he was: He saw Heaven open'd, and a certain Vessel coming down to him, wherein were all manner of Beasts, Fowls, and creeping Things: and there came a *Voice* to him, saying, *Rise Peter, kill, and eat*—You know the Story. And it is so like that of the Transfiguration, that I cannot help thinking this a *Vision* too. For while *Jesus* prayed, the Disciples, according to Custom, fell asleep. *Peter* being a Man of a warm lively Imagination, and an active Spirit, was most likely to dream (or see) this *Vision* of *Moses* and *Elias* talking with *Jesus*: and happening to look up, in the midst of his Dream, but half-awake, he

SECT. I.

might see the Sun shining full upon *Jesus*, and upon *James* and *John* the other two Disciples, whom he might easily mistake for *Moses* and *Elias*; considering the surprize and drousy Confusion he was in, (which was so great, that the *Evangelist* tells us, *he knew not what he said*,) and might conclude that his Dream concerning these two Prophets was a reality. And when he came afterward to tell the other two Disciples of his Vision; they having been asleep too, might readily believe it to be a real Fact; and so might tell it to others as if they had seen it themselves. This view of the Case will account for the whole Mystery of the Transfiguration. *Jesus* himself expressly called it a *Vision*: And I think I have given you a very natural and consistent Account of it.

N. Seeing you introduce this fanciful Account of the Transfiguration with some Reflections upon *Peter's* Vision in the *Acts*; I shall only observe that it had nothing of a *natural* Dream in it; but was really *miraculous*, or *divine*: and that *Peter* was convinced of this, not only by the Nature and Circumstances of the Vision, but by a Series of *Facts* that corresponded to it. The same holy Spirit that was the Author of his Vision, explain'd it to him; and shewed him that he was no longer to reckon the *Gentiles* profane, or unfit to be convers'd with. What he saw and heard when he was in a *Trance*, is related as a *Vision*; and expressly call'd so. But the Transfiguration is recorded in the same way as other Facts in the Gospels are. *Peter* assures us, that he and the two other Disciples were Eye-witnesses of it, *Moses* and *Elias* appear'd in Glory unto all the three equally. So that it cou'd not be a *Vision* of *Peter's* only as you imagin. It is true, St.

Luke

Luke says that they were *heavy with Sleep* : but it was *when they were awake* that they saw the Glory of *Jesus*, and the *two Men* that stood with him. The *Posture* in which *Moses* and *Elias* appear'd, evidently shows that *Peter* cou'd not fancy *James* and *John* to be the two Prophets as you conjecture : for the Disciples being *asleep* must have lain upon the Ground : whereas *Moses* and *Elias* stood while they talk't with *Jesus*. St. *Luke*'s adding that *Peter* knew not what he said, shows that the Apostle was under a fright and surprize : but does not any-way imply that he was but *half-awake* ; as you pretend. Besides, $\mu\eta\ \epsilon\iota\delta\omega\varsigma\ \delta\ \lambda\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\epsilon\iota$, shou'd, I think, be render'd, *not considering what he said*. In this Sense $\epsilon\iota\delta\acute{\epsilon}\nu\alpha\iota$ is us'd by the same *Evangelist* * elsewhere. Now when he tells us that St. *Peter* did not consider what he said ; his plain meaning is, that when the Apostle propos'd the making Tabernacles for *Moses* and *Elias*, he forgot, (or, *did not consider*) that these two Prophets did not come to tarry upon Earth ; but only appear'd for a short while to assist at this glorious Solemnity. St. *Mark*'s Words justify this Interpretation : he says that *Peter* knew not (or rather, *did not recollect*) what to say. He thought it was necessary for him to say something on the occasion, that might show his Respect for *Moses* and *Elias* ; but cou'd not consider, (or readily think,) of any thing more proper than building Tabernacles upon the

D 4

Mount

* In *Luk. xxiii. 34*. Instead of, *they know not*, it shou'd be, *they consider not what they do*. And in *Acts xxiii. 5*. (a Passage that has puzzled the greatest Criticks) $\delta\upsilon\kappa\ \eta\delta\epsilon\iota\mu$, shou'd be render'd, *I did not consider*.—The Apostle's just Resentment and Indignation at the High-Priest's Injustice, transported him beyond the Rules of Decency ; which, upon Recollection, he candidly acknowledged. See also *Rom. xiii. 11*.

SECT. I. Mount for their Accommodation. Tho' *Jesus* called the Transfiguration, a *Vision*, he only meant the *Sight*, or Scene of Glory, that the Disciples had *seen*. You cannot think there is any Stress to be laid upon the use of an ambiguous Word; when the Sense of it is plainly determin'd by the Context. In short, your Account of the Transfiguration contradicts the unanimous Testimony of the three *Evangelists*. It is only a fanciful Conjecture, without the least Appearance of Truth, Reason, or Probability to support it. And you might full as well have told us in plain Terms that you don't believe what the *Evangelists* say of the Transfiguration of *Jesus*; as pretend to account for it without a Miracle.

Disc. I, p.
41.

M. Austin owns that this whole Transaction might be perform'd by Magick Art.

N. In the Passage that *Mr. W.* quotes, *Austin* speaks only of the *Voice* from Heaven: and does not say that this part of the Miracle cou'd be counterfeited by any Art; but that Infidels might *suppose* it to be the effect of Magick. But the same absurd Supposition may be made as to any Fact whatever. For if the sight and hearing of several Persons, at the same time, may be so far imposed upon, as that in open Day they shall actually see the most glorious (and seemingly *real*) Appearances; and hear a solemn Voice as coming *down* from Heaven towards them: nay, that they shall see Men close by them, and hear them talk together; while the whole Transaction is a mere Dream, or Illusion; without any Truth or Reality in it: I say, if this may be supposed to happen to several Persons; we can never trust our Senses in any Case, for fear of being deceived. Such senseless Suppositions as these lead to *absolute* Scepticism; which is the *height* of Madness.

M. If

M. If this was really such a signal and important Miracle as you represent it, why was it not done in the Presence of the Multitude, as well as of three of the Apostles? The more Witnesses there are to any Miracle, the better it is attested: and the more reasonably credited. And there cou'd not surely be too many Witnesses of this any more than of others of *Jesus's* Miracles, if real ones. Ought not the unbelieving Multitude to have had a sight and hearing of this Miracle as well as the Apostles? Who shou'd rather see it than those that wanted Conviction?

N. It is impossible for us to assign the true Reasons why the particular Circumstances that attended every Miracle in the Gospels were preferr'd to any other, that to us might seem equally proper; or perhaps more eligible. Our views are very scanty and confin'd: nor can we judge aright of Things that do not fall within our reach. The Nature, Subject, Time, Place, Manner, Witnesses, and other Circumstances of each particular Miracle that *Jesus* wrought, were fixt and determin'd by the divine Wisdom; and therefore, were, upon the whole, the best, and fittest always that cou'd be chosen. His Miracles were generally done in the most *publick* manner; in the open *Day*; before *many* Witnesses; in *Cities* and *Towns*; at some great *Festival*; sometimes in the *Synagogues*, in the Presence of his watchful *Enemys*; or in the *Streets*; and often upon *noted* Persons that were well known to have been *always* Blind, or Lame; or to have labour'd many Years under some inveterate Distemper. So that the Multitude in *every* place cou'd not but have seen several unquestionable Miracles wrought by *Jesus*: and there cou'd be no Necessity

SECT. I.

 necessity for their seeing *every* wonderful Work that he did. But indeed at his Transfiguration he did no Miracle himself: he was intirely Passive. The whole Transaction was the immediate Work of Almighty God; who acknowledged and glorified his *beloved Son*; and sent *Moses* and *Elias* to attend and honour him at this Solemnity. I observ'd before that the same divine Voice was heard from Heaven at his Baptism; and the same solemn Acknowledgment was made, of his being the *beloved Son* of God. On another occasion too, when he besought the *Father* to glorify his *Name*; there came a Voice (like *Thunder*) from Heaven; saying, *I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again*. This divine Voice and Answer from the Almighty himself was heard by the *Multitude* that was present; who fancied that *an Angel spake to him*. Now since the same divine Testimony that was given to *Jesus* on the Mount by an immediate Voice from God himself (which is the chief part of the Miracle at his Transfiguration) was heard on other Occasions, by the *Multitude*; there was no need of their being present to see him transfigured: especially seeing they were assur'd of it afterwards by the three Apostles who saw it.

Joh. xii. 28.

M. The Apostles were Partys in the Cause: so that the People had no Reason to take their Word for the Truth of the Miracle.

N. They were no more Partys, or any farther concern'd in the Transaction, than the People themselves must have been, if they had been present. For, they wou'd have been obliged, as candid Witnesses, to report faithfully what they heard, and saw: and the Apostles did no more. Besides, if the *Multitude* had been present, the Matter cou'd not have

have appear'd one jot more credible to us: because, for the Truth of their being present, we must still have rely'd (as we now do) upon the Testimony of the *Evangelists*. I shall only add here that their Testimony is this (as well as in every other) Case, must appear unquestionably true, to all considerate Persons. For, if in the Account they give of the Transfiguration, they had been inclin'd to deviate in the least from the Truth; it wou'd have been as easy for them to represent this Miracle as done in a *Valley*, before the Multitude; as on a *Mount*, in Presence of only three of the Apostles. But they always show the strictest regard to Truth; even when it seems to lessen the Credit and Honour of *Jesus*; and fullys their own Reputation. I only hint at this important Remark at present, because I shall have occasion to insist upon it more fully afterwards. We have now dispatch't the first *Discourse*: let us proceed to the *second*.

M. There Mr. *W.* has shown how successfully *Jesus* practis'd upon the Credulity of three *silly Women*—

T. Speak softly, Sir; the Ladys will hear you. They are just coming in to Breakfast: so that you must adjourn your Debate till they have done.



S E C T. II.

SECT. II.

T. **N**OW the Ladys are gone, Mr. M. you may talk of the *silly Women* as freely as you please. I think Mr. W.'s second Discourse begins with the Story of the Woman that *Jesus* cur'd of an *Issue of Blood* that had lasted twelve Years.

Matt. ix. 18.

Mark v. 25.

Luk. viii. 43.

Disc. 2. p. 9.

M. That must be suppos'd to be one of the greatest Miracles that *Jesus* wrought, else it wou'd not have been particularly related; but thrown into the lump of all manner of Diseases that he heal'd.

N. Tho' it be an undoubted and surprizing Miracle, it cannot be reckon'd one of the greatest that *Jesus* wrought. The *Evangelists* do not seem to have had regard merely to the surprizing Nature of the Miracles they recorded; but to have been determin'd by some other Reasons to mention those they have related, rather than many others that were equally great; or perhaps more astonishing. It is not easy to assign the true Reasons that influenc'd them in their Choice: but probably those they have recorded were more publick; and such as cou'd have been more easily inquir'd into than the rest. Or, since all the Apostles cou'd not conveniently be present at every Miracle; it is probable that St. *Matthew* generally chose to mention those Miracles that he himself saw done: as having made a deeper Impression upon his Mind, than such as he was inform'd of by the other Apostles. And St. *Mark* and St. *Luke* might mention those Miracles

racles only which they were assured of by such as were *Eye-witnesses* of what these two *Evangelists* have recorded. And perhaps they sometimes prefer'd such Miracles as they severally thought most important and surprizing: about which they might differ as much in their Opinions as others now do.

SECT. II.

See Luk. i. 2.

T. Gentlemen, it is of little Importance whether the Miracle before us, be one of the greatest that *Jesus* wrought; or whether the *Evangelists* thought it so, The Question is whether it was really a Miracle: or to talk in Mr. W.'s way, whether the literal Story be attended with Incredibilities, and Absurdities.

M. To determin this we must consider the Nature of the Woman's Disease; and the means by which the Cure was perform'd. As to the Nature of the Disease, we are much in the dark; and very uncertain of what kind and degree it was. St. *Matthew* says the Woman was αιμορροῦσα, that is, subject to Bleeding. St. *Mark* and St. *Luke* say, that she laboured under an efflux or running of Blood. But neither of them tell us in what degree her Hæmorrhage was; nor from what part of her Body it proceeded: nor how often or seldom she was addicted to it. It might for ought we know be only a little Bleeding at the Nose, that she was now and then subject to: or an Obnoxiousness to an Evacuation of Blood by Stool or Urine: or it was not improbably of the menstruous Kind. Now it is necessary to know the Nature of the Distemper, or none truly and properly can say there was a great, much less a miraculous Cure wrought.

Disc. 2. p. 10.

Disc. 2. p. 11.

N. It cou'd be of little use to know the particular Kind or Degree of the Woman's Flux of Blood. Had her Disease been common, St. *Luke*,

SECT. II. *Luke*, being a *Physician* himself, wou'd have told us its Nature and proper Name; as he
 Luk. iv. 38. does in other common Cases. If it was of the
 menstruious kind, which (as Mr. *W.* observes)
 Acts xxviii. is not improbable; a scrupulous Modesty might
 8. restrain him from taking Notice of it. But of
 whatever Kind this Issue of Blood was, and in
 whatever Degree; from what the *Evangelists*
 say, the Case appears to have been dangerous
 and inveterate; seeing it had lasted *twelve* Years;
 and was not cured by all the Skill of *many*
Physicians; nor the various Remedys they must
 Ch. viii. 43. have try'd. St. *Luke* says she *cou'd not be heal'd*
of any: which implys that her Illness either
 really was in itself incurable; or at least was
 reckon'd such by Physicians. St. *Mark* tells
 Ch. v. 26. us she had *suffer'd many Things of many Physi-*
cians; and had spent all that she had upon them;
 yet was *nothing better'd*; but rather grew worse.
 Now let any-one judge from this account of
 her Case, whether it cou'd possibly be only
 some *slight cutaneous Distemper*; or perhaps a
little Bleeding at the Nose!

M. But how will you make a *grievous Distemper* of it in order to a Miracle?

N. If a Flux of Blood that had lasted twelve Years, and baffled all the Skill of Physicians be not a *grievous and inveterate Disease*, I know not what can be reckon'd so.

M. The Woman subsisted too long under it, and bore it too well, to make her Case very dangerous. It cou'd not be a continual Effusion of Blood that she labour'd under; for Physicians will agree, I suppose, that it was not possible for Nature to endure it so long; or the Woman to live twelve Days, much less twelve Years, under it.

N. A dayly or continual Flux of Blood may be (and long continue) so very gentle and moderate as not to exceed the dayly Supply of Blood that the Patient has by proper and nourishing Food : which seems to have been this Woman's Case for some Years at least. In some Constitutions there is such a good Digestion ; and the Tone and Elasticity of the Vessels that contribute towards Sanguification may be so strong, and so exactly adapted to the Quantity and Quality of the Fluids ; that they prepare and supply twice as much Blood, as Others of a different Make and Constitution have from the same sort and quantity of Meat and Drink ; and in much less time. In healthy Persons, a seasonable temperate Meal of proper Food and Drink is turn'd into good Blood in ten or twelve Hours generally ; and some nourishing Liquids much sooner. While in Cachexys, and some other Chronical Diseases, the Tone of the Solids is so weaken'd, and the Temperament of the Fluids is so faulty ; or their Quantity so disproportion'd to the force of the Solids ; as not to supply Blood and Spirits sufficient for repairing the dayly Waste that the common Animal-functions make : besides the additional Waste made by improper Exercise, intense Study, or violent Passions. And in such Cases, Atrophys, Consumptions, and Death ensue.

M. You have got beyond my Depth, Doctor. But as far as I can judge of your Doctrine of Sanguification, the Woman's Hæmorrhage might have been rather of Advantage to her Health, than of any Danger to her. For, if her Constitution supply'd Blood faster than other People's, or in a larger Quantity than her Health cou'd require, as you conjecture ; an
unusual

SECT. II.  unusual way of evacuating such superfluous Blood seems to have been necessary to her Health and Preservation. Thus we find that some Hæmorrhages are better kept open, than stopt and dry'd up. And if Infidels shou'd say that this Woman's was a Preservative of her Life; like an Issue at which Nature discharges itself of bad Humours, who can contradict them? She liv'd twelve Years under it; and might have liv'd twenty more, tho' she had not been cured.

Disc. 2. p.
12.

N. When a Disease is obstinate and incurable, all that Physicians can do is to support the Patient under it, as well as they can; to lengthen Life, and make it as easy as may be. This it seems was all that the Woman's Physicians cou'd do for her: and in this they succeeded tolerably well. Nor was it difficult to do so. For they cou'd not but know that the Danger arising from an incurable Evacuation of Blood must be guarded against by an uncommon supply of it; which a proper Quantity of nourishing Food and Drink wou'd readily afford. But this Relief cou'd not always last; seeing the increase of the Woman's Age; and the changes of Air, Exercise, Diet, and other various Circumstances, nay even the Continuance of her Illness, must affect her Constitution insensibly; and render her Case more dangerous. And in Fact it happen'd that she *grew worse*. Whence it appears that her Issue of Blood was so far from preserving her Health, that tho' by the Advice of her Physicians, (and probably a very strict Regimen) she held out some Years under it; her incurable Illness increased; and in all Probability must have hasten'd her Death, if she had not been miraculously cured.

M. If

M. If her Case had been so dangerous as SECT. II.
you represent it, she cou'd never have born the
press of the People to come at *Jesus*. 

N. She was not so much weaken'd but she
cou'd walk, and make shift to get near *Jesus*.
And seeing she had hopes of being cured by
him, and no other way; we cannot wonder at
exerting herself to the utmost, even beyond
what her common Strength, and a regard to
her Ease and Safety cou'd well permit. The
Necessity of her Case, and vigorous Hopes, must
have given her an uncommon height of Resolu-
tion; which on some occasions, Women are
observ'd to show in as high a degree as Men.

M. Since the Distemper is uncertain both as Dist. 2. p.
to the Nature and Degree of it; how can there 13.
be any certainty of a Miracle in the Cure of it.

N. Because whatever the kind and degree of
her Illness might be, it was *inveterate*; having
lasted many Years: it *cou'd not be cured* by all
the Art of the *many* Physicians that had try'd
their Skill upon her: it was *grievous*; she ha-
ving *suffer'd* much, or *many things*, under their
Hands: it was *dangerous*; seeing she *grew worse*.
And yet *Jesus* in one Moment cured her of this
inveterate, incurable, dangerous Distemper,
without the use of any means whatever.

M. The manner of her Cure was surprizing Dist. 2. p.
enough; but, I think, not miraculous. The 14.
Power of her Faith, or fancy in the Case was
a good Preparative for Relief: and without it,
she had probably continued under her Disease.
It is well known that the Power of the Imagi-
nation will work Wonders, see Visions, pro-
duce Monsters, and heal Diseases; as Experi-
ence and History do testify. There being ma-
ny Instances to be given of Cures perform'd by
frivolous Applications, Charms, and Spells;

SECT. II.

(and as mean Trifles as a touch of *Christ's* Garment;) which are unaccountable any other way than by the Imagination of the Patient. As Despair and Dejection of Mind sometimes kills, where otherwise proper Medicines wou'd probably Cure: so a good Conceit in the Patient at other times, whether the Medicines be pertinent or not is almost all in all. And if Infidels shou'd say that this was the Case of this Woman in the Gospel; and that her own Imagination cured her, who can help it? You must prove that her Hæmorrhage was of that kind, that no Faith or Strength of fancy in herself cou'd help her, without the divine Power.

N. The Cures of some Distempers are often imputed by the Vulgar to Charms and Spells: and some learned Men have pretended to account for these Cures by the force of *Imagination*; which in most Cases is really as much a Charm as any of those that they despise; and as little able to produce those Cures they pretend to account for. The Truth of the Case is: neither the Spells or trifling Applications that are used, nor the Power of Imagination, have, (of *themselves*) any real Efficacy in the supposed Cures. The Persons that find themselves better within some Days (or Weeks perhaps) after they use Charms, or Trifles, wou'd have found themselves as soon well without them. We sometimes see poor People cured of their Diseases without any sort of Medicines. And if such People had happen'd to use any Spell or Trinket just before their Recovery; such Spell (or any trifling Prescription) wou'd have been thought the true Cause of their Cure; as it is in Cases where such Trifles are used or apply'd. But in such Cases, the Cure is really owing either to some critical Evacuation, or Secretion;

Secretion; or to Abstinence, Exercise, or a change of Diet, or Air: either of which may happen sometimes to check a Distemper, and to cure it by degrees. Or perhaps some proper Medicine, that the Patient took several Days before, had not its full effect upon the Body till the Spell, or Trifle was apply'd. And since whatever Medicine, or other Application, is *last* used in any Case, generally has the Credit of the Cure; therefore a Charm, or the force of Imagination is sometimes thought to have cured a Disease that was really remov'd by the Medicines, or proper Diet, or other common Means that had before been used. What I have now said of Cures suppos'd to be wrought by Trifles, or the Strength of Imagination alone, will, I believe, be acknowledg'd by the best Physicians to be agreeable to Reason and Experience. And I know not how we can better determin the Case before us, than by appealing to them, whether such an Issue of Blood as the *Evangelist* represent the Woman's, cou'd be cur'd in a Moment, by her fancy alone, without the Interposition of the divine Power. They who can think so, must be resolv'd to believe the most absurd and incredible Things, rather than acknowledge any Event whatever to be the effect of a supernatural or miraculous Power. The force of *Imagination* is confessedly great; and its effects are often very surprizing. It assists the Operation of Medicines; and may by degrees *help* to cure such Illnesses as it self had occasion'd, or increas'd. But surely no one can believe, that it cou'd in an Instant cure such an obstinate chronical Disease as a Flux of Blood (however gentle it were suppos'd) that all the Art of Physicians cou'd not stop:

SECT. II. especially when the Distemper was grown *worse* than it had been before.

M. It is the more likely that her Cure was owing to her Faith, or Imagination, because we find *Jesus* himself imputed the Cure of others to their *Faith*, or their strong Conceit of his miraculous Power; which seems to have been a Qualification that he requir'd in those he cured.

N. You are quite mistaken, Sir; there are but very few of whose *Faith* there is any mention made in the Gospels. And tho' *Jesus* said to some that their Faith hath saved them, or made them whole; there is no more Reason to impute their Cure to their Faith as the efficient Cause of it, than to ascribe the Cure of others to the Faith, (or, as you call it, the *strong Imagination*,) of those who brought them: which we find sometimes commended.

See Matt.
viii. 10. 13.
Ch. xv. 28.

Disc. 2. p.
15.

M. The *Evangelists* expressly tell us that *Jesus* cou'd do no Cures against Unbelief.

N. For Proof of this shrewd Observation, I remember Mr. *W.* quotes St. *Matthew*; who says that *Jesus* did not many mighty Works [in his own Country,] *because of their Unbelief*. But is his not doing MANY, a Proof that he cou'd do NONE? Some he certainly did, tho' not very many. This is plainly imply'd in the Passage referr'd to. And St. *Mark* tells us expressly, that *Jesus* then *heal'd a few sick Folks*, only by *laying his Hands upon them*. Besides we find that once at least he wrought a miraculous Cure upon an Infidel: for we cannot suppose that *Malchus* the High-Priest's Servant (who came among others to seize *Jesus*, in order to put him to Death,) was a Believer.

Luk. xxii.
51.

Ch. vi. 5.

Ch. xiii. 58.

M. But

M. But was it not *because of their Unbelief* that he *cou'd do no mighty Work* among his Countrymen? And since a *mighty Work* must signify a Miracle; does not this imply that the few Cures which *Jesus* then wrought in his own Country were not truly *miraculous*. They *knew* him; and therefore did not believe in him. And because of their Unbelief, and their wanting a high Conceit or Perswasion of his wonderful Power, he *cou'd do no mighty Work* among them.

N. They knew his Poverty, the Meanness of his Parentage, and of his Employment; and this confirm'd their other Prejudices against him. But tho' they did not acknowledge him to be the *Messiah*; he *beal'd* some *sick Folks* among them, even *against* their *Unbelief*. And these were such surprizing Cures, that the unbelieving Multitude cou'd not but own them to be Miracles, or *mighty Works*. When they heard him teach in their Synagogues, they were equally astonish't at his Knowledge, and at his Power: and said, *Whence hath this Man this Wisdom, and these mighty Works*. This shows, that tho' they did not believe in him, they cou'd not but acknowledge that the Cures he wrought among them were truly *miraculous*. It is true, St. Mark says, that "*Jesus* cou'd there do no mighty Work, save that he laid his Hands upon a few sick Folks, and healed them". But in this place (as in many other Passages of the New Testament,) *δυναμις* does not relate to the real Power of acting, but to the Views, the Consistency, and the Reasonableness of acting. He *cou'd not* do many mighty Works there *consistently* with his Wisdom and Goodness: because it wou'd have been in vain. The People were so vio-

See Matt.
xiii. 54.
Mark vi. 2.
See Joh. i.
46.
Ch. vii. 52.

Matt. xiii.
54.

SECT. II.



2 Cor. xiii. 8.

1 Cor. iii. 1.

lently prejudiced against him, as to be altogether indispos'd for receiving the Truth; for Confirmation of which his Miracles were chiefly wrought. And if he had done more among them, than he did; it wou'd only have aggravated their Guilt, and Condemnation. In the same Sense St. Paul says, *He cou'd do nothing against the Truth*; and that he cou'd not speak to the *Corinthians as unto spiritual Persons*. And we dayly say that we *cannot do this or the other thing*, when we mean to let People know that we reckon it inconsistent with *Virtue*, or *Prudence*; or contrary to our *Duty*, or *Commission*.

T. Gentlemen, you are inquiring into the true Cause of the Woman's Cure; whether it was owing to her Faith, or to her own Fancy, or to the Power of *Jesus*. You seem to be going-off from the Point in hand.

M. Faith and Fancy here are much the same. Now *Jesus* assures us, that it was her *Faith*, (or her high Opinion of his wonderful Power,) that made her whole: that is, she was cured by her Conceit of his Power, or the Strength of her own Imagination.

N. All that *Jesus* cou'd possibly mean by saying that her Faith had made her whole, was, that her Faith was the Condition, or Occasion of his exerting his wonderful Power in curing her: or that it was a Motive that (in Concurrency with others) induc'd him to show her this Instance of his Goodness: but he cou'd not mean that it was the active and *efficient Cause* of her Cure. We find that the Cures of some were, in the same Terms, imputed to the *Faith* of those who besought *Jesus* in behalf of the diseased. And there is just as much Reason to suppose that such Persons were cured by the Faith of others; as to imagin that any cou'd be

be cur'd by their-own Faith. The Woman SECT. II.
was heal'd of her Issue of Blood, by *Vertue* of 
that wonderful Power that *Jesus* exerted and
perceiv'd to go out from him, the Moment that
she touch't his Garment.

M. Surely his Virtue hung very loose on
him ; else the Woman's Faith like a Fascinati- Disc. a. p.
16.
on cou'd never have extracted it against his
Will and Knowledge.

N. This Sentence (which you seem to be pe-
culiarly pleased with) contains as much Non-
sense, Falshood, and Contradiction as cou'd
well be crouded into so few Words. So true
is it that nothing leads Men into grosser Absur-
ditys, than an excessive and unseasonable Af-
fectionation of being witty. *Virtue hung loose on
him—Woman's Faith attracting it—Like a Fas-
cination!*—All this is to me no better than Gib-
berish. *Δυναμὶς* here (and in other places) sig- Luk. viii. 46.
Ch. xxiv. 49.
Acts i. 8.
Ch. x. 38.
nifys a *miraculous Power* : and it might be bet-
ter render'd so in this place than by the ambi-
guous Term, [*Virtue.*] But as to Mr. *W.*'s
quaint Remark, if he meant that *Christ's* won-
derful *Power* was not under his Command, or
at his Disposol ; the Assertion is absurdly false.
For, if the Power of curing the Woman was
not under his Direction, it cou'd not be *his*
Power. And if it was *his*, it cou'd not be ex-
tracted from him *against* his *Will*. Yet Mr. *W.*
says, that the Woman's Faith, *like a Fascina-
tion*, extracted it from him not only against his
Will, but even against his *Knowledge*. Every
Act, or Operation, of a moral Agent, neces-
sarily implys both Knowledge, and Design, or
Choice. So that to suppose the miraculous
Power of *Jesus* to be exerted, (or as you call
it, *extracted*) without his Knowledge, is a ridi-
culous Contradiction. Such an exerting or ef-

SECT. II. fect of Power cou'd not properly speaking be *his* act ; but must be some mechanical Operation, the effect of natural Causes, in which he did not concur ; or the act of some other Agent. The absurd Supposition of Christ's Power being extracted without his Knowledge, is directly contrary to Scripture too. For he told his Disciples that he perceived (or was conscious) that a healing *Power* was *gone out* from *him* (or was exerted by him) in the Woman's Cure.

Disc. 2. p.
16.

M. Perhaps *Jesus* being secretly appriz'd of her Faith, and touch of him, took the hint ; and to comfort and confirm her in her Conceit, and to help forward the Cure, said that *Virtue* (or *Power*) *was gone out of him*.

Luk. viii. 44.

Ver. 45.

Disc. 2. p.
16.

N. His being *secretly appriz'd* of the Woman's Faith, and of her touching him, was an evident Proof of his supernatural Knowledge : there being no other way to account for his being appriz'd of her secret Thoughts, and her imperceptible touching his Garment. She had *said* indeed (not *aloud*, or to others ;) but *within herself* ; (that is, she was perswaded) that *if she might but touch his Garment, she shou'd be made whole*. But her doing this, could not possibly be perceiv'd by *Jesus* in a natural way, or sensible manner. For, she *came behind him*, and *only touch't the border of his Garment*. And she did this while the Multitude *throng'd* about him, and *press't* upon him. What *Jesus* said on this occasion (namely, that a healing *Power* *was gone out from him*) cou'd not be spoken with any view of confirming the Woman in her Hope or Conceit, of being cured, or to help forward the Cure, as Mr. W. *untowardly enough suggests*. For, before *Jesus* spake these Words, she was cured already. The Moment
she

she touch't his Garment, *her Issue of Blood* SECT. II.
stanch't: or, as St. Mark expresses it; *straight-*
way, (or immediately,) *the fountain of her Blood* Mark v. 29.
was dry'd up: and she felt in her Body that she
was heal'd of that Plague.

M. But what occasion cou'd there be for his taking any Notice of her having touch't him, if she was already cured by it.

N. He might do it for several Reasons:

(1.) It made the Miracle publick by the Woman's *falling down before him, and declaring unto him before all the People, for what cause she had touch't him, and how she was heal'd immediately.* Luk. viii. 47.

(2.) His Enemys had hereby an opportunity given them to inform, and assure themselves of the Woman's Name, Abode, Character, Disease, and perfect Cure. (3.) Perhaps he spake to her to encourage and commend her singular Faith, for an Example to others. Or, (4.) He might do it to show that as his Power cou'd not possibly be exerted *without his Knowledge*; so it was not employ'd without his Will and Consent. He went about doing Good; and never *refus'd* Relief to any sick, distress't, or miserable Person: being always as willing and forward, as able to relieve and assist every proper Object of Compassion.

M. It is said that when the *Pope* was last at *Benevento*, he wrought three Miracles, which I Disc. 2. p. 16, 17 dare say you believe nothing at all of. And if we had been told of his curing an Hæmorrhage like this before us, *Protestants* would have said, that a foolish, credulous, superstitious Woman having fancied herself cured of some slight Indisposition, the crafty *Pope* and his Adherents, aspiring after popular Applause, magnified the presumed Cure into a Miracle. I leave you to make the Application.

N. This

SECT. II.



N. This supposed Story is so far from being *parallel* to the miraculous Cure we have been considering; that it scarce agrees with it in one single Circumstance. There is as great a difference, as to Truth and Credibility, betwixt the Pope's *lying Wonders*, and the true Miracles of *Christ*; as betwixt the *Apostles* Creed, and that of Pope *Pius* the Fourth. But we shall have occasion to consider *Popish* Miracles, when we come to inquire how far the Miracles of *Jesus* are a Proof of his divine Authority.

T. What Miracle comes next to be examin'd?

N. That which was wrought upon another
 Luk. xiii 11. *Woman* who had a *Spirit of Infirmary* eighteen Years; and was so bow'd together, that she cou'd no-ways lift up herself.

T. Mr. M. what have you to object against this Fact?

Disc. 2. p.
27.

M. I will allow that *Jesus* might lay his Hands on, and speak comfortably to such a drooping, vaporous, stooping *Woman*, full of fancies of the Devil's Power over her: and she might thereupon recover, and be afterwards of a more chearful Heart, and erect Countenance; freed from the whimsical Imagination of being Satan-ridden. And what of all that? Where is the Miracle? If the Story of such a Miracle had been related of an Arch-Heretick, or a *Popish* Exorcist, you wou'd have flouted at it. Take the *Devil* out of the Story; and then there is no more in it than what is common; that a simple, drooping, melancholy *Woman* was chear'd and elated upon receiving comfortable Advice and Admonition from a reputedly wise and good Man. To obviate the Insinuations of Infidels, you must find out a way to ascertain the Truth and Greatness of the
 Woman's

Woman's Cure ; or give up the Miracle : I mean you must determin certainly what was her Distemper ; and show that the Cure of it by ordinary Means was impossible ; or make no more Words about it. SECT. II.

N. You can scarce expect a serious Answer to such bantering Stuff as this. It is impossible you shou'd think that St. Luke's Words can bear such a ridiculous Construction as you put upon them ; or that he meant to describe the Case of a fanciful melancholy Woman. He says, " She had a Spirit of Infirmary *eigh-*
 " *teen* Years ; and was *bowed together* : and
 " cou'd *no-ways* lift up herself. And when Je-
 " *sus* saw her [in the Synagogue] he called her Ver. 17.
 " to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou
 " art *loosed* from thine Infirmary. So he laid
 " his Hands on her ; and *immediately* she was
 " *made straight*". I appeal now to any Per-
 son of common-sense, whether this short Ac-
 count of the Woman's Case be applicable to
 one that was only vapourish, drooping, and de-
 jected : but upon *Christ's* speaking comforta-
 bly to her, became of a more chearful and
erect Countenance, as you call it.

T. The best way to come at the true Know-
 ledge of the Woman's Disease is by consider-
 ing the true import of the original Words that
 the *Evangelist* useth.

M. It is so. Now he says that she was one, Disc. 2. p.
24.
πνεῦμα ἔχουσα ἀσθενείας, that *had a Spirit of In-*
firmity or Weakness : that is, she was poor-spi-
 rited and pusillanimous. And if she was *συν-*
κλίτουσα, *bowed down* upon it, this is no more
 than might be expected of a melancholy and
 dejected Person. Here then is the Woman's
 Disease. Had it been worse, St. Luke the
 Physician, if he was skilful in his Art, shou'd
 have

SECT. II. have express't himself better ; so as to give us another Conception of it.

N. He has express't himself in the properest Terms that cou'd be used. Συγκύπτουσα is not merely being bowed-down, but bowed-together : which implys a great deal more than *stooping* so as old or weak People sometimes do. And to put his true Meaning beyond all doubt, the *Evangelist* adds that she was *so* bowed-together, that she *cou'd* no-way lift up herself, or stand erect : but that after her Cure, ἀνωρθώθη, she was made straight. This shows as plainly as proper Words can do it, that he spake of her Body's being bowed-together ; and not of any figurative stooping, or drooping Dejection of her Mind. It is hard we shou'd be put upon proving things that are so very plain and evident.

M. You pass over the main Difficulty, which is, that he says she had a *Spirit* of Infirmary or *Weakness* : which may very well mean that she had a poor Spirit, or a *weak* melancholy *Mind* : and then the other Expressions must be figuratively interpreted to make them consistent with the principal Character of her Illness.

N. What St. Luke means by a *Spirit* of Infirmary is best explain'd by the effects of it, which we have already consider'd. Πνεῦμα ἀσθενείας (a frequent *Hebraism*) is an *infirm Spirit*. And ἔχειν often signifys to * labour under or to be afflicted by any Thing. So that the Meaning of πνεῦμα ἔχουσα ἀσθενείας is ; being afflicted by (or labouring under) an *infirm Spirit* ; or a *Spirit* that was the Cause of her *Infirmary*. That this is the *Evangelist's* Meaning appears from what

* See Luk. vii. 33. Ch. viii. 27. Job. v. 5. Mar. iii. 30. Acts xxviii. 9.

what our Saviour said to the Ruler of the Synagogue, when he murmur'd at his healing her on the Sabbath-day; that she whom *Satan* had bound (or bowed together) for eighteen Years, ought to be loos'd from that Bond on the Sabbath-day. This plainly shows that the infirm Spirit she labour'd under, was not any Weakness or Dejection of *her-own* Mind: but that she was really believ'd by the *Evangelist* and others to be possess't, or afflicted by an evil Spirit that was the Cause of her Infirmary.

M. You speak very cautiously; as if you doubted whether she was really possess't by the Devil, or not.

N. St. *Luke* does not expressly say that she was; tho' his Words are capable of that Construction. It is possible that *Jesus* might comply with the common way of speaking; and seem to acquiesce in the vulgar Notion that prevail'd among the *Jews*, in ascribing such a grievous and inveterate Distemper as this Woman's, to some Evil-spirit that was supposed to inflict it. The wisest Philosophers, (and even the sacred Writers) without having their Wisdom, or their Sincerity called in Question, speak of common Things as the Vulgar do; and seem to fall in with the Notions that are generally receiv'd in the World, about the Motion of the Sun, the Fixedness of the Earth; Colours, Heat, and other sensible Qualities. But however that may be; whether the Devil be taken out of the Story, or be left in it, whether the Woman's Disease flowed originally from any Power, or Permission, the Devil had to inflict it; or whether our Saviour seem'd to acquiesce in a vulgar harmless Opinion, and way of speaking that prevail'd among the *Jews*; is of little Importance, as to the Nature and Truth

SECT. II.

Truth of the Miracle. If the Woman was not then *actually* possess't by an Evil-spirit, the cure of her Illness cou'd not be the less miraculous. She was subject *eighteen Years* to an *Infirmity*, or *Illness*, that bowed her together; and made her incapable of raising herself up: and upon *Christ's* telling her that she was loosed from her Infirmity, she was *immediately* made *straight* and well. This is the Fact *St. Luke* relates. And he who can believe that this cou'd be effected without a miraculous or divine Power must be very *credulous*.

M. It is strange that such a *skilful* Physician as we may reasonably suppose *St. Luke* to be, shou'd not have so accurately described the Woman's Disease, as to leave no room for doubting of the miraculous Cure of it.

N. Wou'd you have had him describe it in anatomical Terms? If he had done so, you wou'd have called him conceited and pedantick. Supposing he had told us that her Illness consisted chiefly in a violent *obstinate Contraction* of the intercostal Muscles called *par quadratum*, and the *Recti*, of the *Abdomen*; or by a great and *persevering Relaxation* of the *Longissimi*, the *Sacri* and *Semispinati*; wou'd common Readers have been much instructed by these technical Terms? Had *St. Luke* express't himself in this manner; the *Cause* of such a violent *Contraction*, or continued *Relaxation* of these Muscles wou'd still have been unknown, or only guess't at. And indeed the *Consequence* of such a disorder'd State of the Muscles, is all that we needed to be informed about; namely, that she was so *bowed together*, that for eighteen Years she cou'd no ways lift up herself, or stand *erect*. Whence we are unavoidably led to conclude, that

that she cou'd not be cured by ordinary Means; and far less by using no Means at all. SECT. II.

M. If St. *Luke* meant to describe such an Incurvity of Body as you suppose; why did he use Terms that rather denote a *drooping* and dejection of *Spirit*. If she laboured under a contracted or a relaxed State of her intercostal Muscles; why did he say that she had a *Spirit of Infirmary*, or an *infirm Spirit*?

N. I shew'd you before that by a *Spirit of Infirmary* he means a Spirit that either was then *actually*, or at least had been *originally*, the Cause of her *Illness*. The *Evangelist* sometimes speak of a disorder that was inflicted by an Evil-spirit, as if it belong'd to the Spirit *itself* rather than to the Person possess't or afflicted by it. Thus St. *Luke* says, that *Jesus* was *casting out a Devil*, and it was *dumb* (or the Cause of the Man's Dumbness);) and when the Devil was gone out, the dumb [Man] spake. St. *Mark* too tells us, that on another Occasion, *Jesus*, casting out a Devil, said, *thou dumb and deaf Spirit, come out of him*. Now as here by a *dumb and deaf Spirit*, *Jesus* meant the Evil-spirit that was the Cause of the Man's Deafness and Dumbness; so by a *Spirit of Infirmary*, or an *infirm Spirit*, St. *Luke* means a Spirit that was either *actually*, or *originally*, the Cause of that Infirmary, or Illness the Woman laboured under. Ch. xi. 14.

M. For all your Criticisms, I cannot but think that if *Satan* had not been brought into the Story, there is nothing more grievous in the Distemper; than what upon the comfortable Exhortations of a wise Man might be cured. Ch. ix. 25.

N. But *Jesus* gave the Woman no *Admonition*, nor *comfortable Exhortations* at all. He only told her she was *loosed from her Infirmary*; and Disc. 2. p. 30.

SECT. II. and *immediately* she was *made straight*, and *glorified* God. What is most remarkable in her Case is, that she does not seem to have expected any Relief from *Jesus*. Nor is there any mention of her having that *Faith* or Perswasion of his wonderful Power which he used to commend in such as had it. She happen'd *accidentally* to be present in the Synagogue, on the Sabbath-Day, among other People: and when *Jesus* saw her, and observ'd her pitiable Condition, he called her to him, and heal'd her. Now if this Woman had been only vapourish, melancholy, and dejected; without being *bowed together*, or having any visible bodily Distemper; is it to be suppos'd that *Jesus* in such a publick solemn Assembly, before so many Witneses, (among whom he cou'd not but have many watchful prejudiced Enemys;) wou'd pretend to cure a Woman that had only some Illness, or slight Indisposition which Nobody cou'd perceive? Nothing can be more incredible. Having been so many Years afflicted, her Neighbours cou'd not but know her Condition. Those that were present must readily have seen that she was *bowed-together*. The Ruler of the Synagogue might know her: at least he saw, and cou'd not but acknowledge her wonderful Cure, in her being *made straight* immediately; tho' he was mov'd with Indignation against *Jesus* for having healed her on the Sabbath-Day.

M. It is pity the *Evangelist* had not told us how old the Woman was when the Distemper first seiz'd her: for then we cou'd have made better Conjectures about the Nature and Cure of it.

N. Whether she was young, or old, the Miracle is still the same. And whatever the Nature

ture of her Distemper was at first, (suppose it the Vapours, or what you please,) it affected her Body so much as to bow her together for eighteen Years. This we are sure of: and we need inquire no farther.

SECT. II.



M. She might be hippish and drooping for a longer time; and be no less easily cured at last.

Disc. 2. p. 30.

N. You speak of the Vapours, or Melancholy, as some slight Disorder that may be cured with all the ease imaginable: but Physicians know that the *Hysterick* Illness in Women, and the *Hypocondriac* in Men, (which we call Vapours, and Hippishness) are real afflicting Distempers, that are sometimes attended with very grievous Symptoms, and hard to be cured, even by Medicines judiciously prescrib'd. And if the stooping Woman were suppos'd to have been eighteen Years subject only to Melancholy and Vapours; I dare say no Physician whatever will assert that she might be naturally cured in a *Moment*, without the use of any means; by being only told that she was freed from her Illness. But this by the bye. Her Case was really as different from the Vapours, as from the Palsy. Nor can her Cure be possibly accounted for without a Miracle.

M. Supposing *Jesus* might exorcise the Devil out of this Woman, or dismount him from off her Shoulders; yet even this makes nothing for his divine Power and Authority: in as much as many Exorcist's among the *Jews*, and even among *Papists* (if *Protestants* had no more Wit than to believe it) cou'd do as much.

N. We had this very Objection before: and I said as much to it then as was necessary. How far *Christ's* casting out Devils, and work-

SECT. II. ing all other kinds of Miracles is a Proof of his divine Authority shall be more fully consider'd afterwards. All I shall observe here is, that the *Evangelist* does not say that in curing the Woman, *Jesus* cast any Devil out of her : but only intimates that she labour'd under (or, was afflicted by) an Evil-spirit that was the *original* Cause of her Infirmary.

Disc. 2. p.
31.

M. I don't believe the *Evangelist* intended that our Saviour shou'd be had in Admiration for the *Letter* of this Miracle ; or he wou'd have so accurately describ'd the Disease as to show that it was out of the Power of Nature and Art to heal it ; which wou'd have put it beyond the Wit of Infidels to cavil at the miraculous Cure of it.

N. To render a Cure truly miraculous, it is not necessary that the Disease shou'd be incurable by the Power of *Art* and *Nature*. Tho' either of them might have cured the Woman by *Degrees*, and the use of *proper Means* ; yet certainly neither Nature, nor Art, nothing less than a divine Power, cou'd cure her in a *Moment* ; without the use of any *Means* at all. Whether it was possible for the *Evangelist* so to describe this Case, or any miraculous Cure whatever, as to put it out of the Power of Infidels to *cavil* at it, may well be questioned. For if this Woman's Illness had been so described as that the best Physicians and Anatomists shou'd have own'd it to be *incurable* ; there might still be some room left for cavilling at the miraculous Cure. Infidels might say that Christ's *laying his Hands* upon the Woman, was using *some Means*, tho' improper, *senseless* and *ineffectual* : that this either contributed towards the Cure, or it did not. If it did ; this affects the Credit of the Miracle. If his

See Disc. 4.
p. 10, 12, 15.

his laying his Hand upon her did nothing towards the Cure ; then it was a silly insignificant Action ; by which he seem'd to use some means however *unpromising* ; but really did nothing at all : which was contrary to the Wisdom and Gravity of *Jesus* ; and showed him to be a vain and trifling Agent. But perhaps Infidels wou'd not stop here : they might farther urge, that *Greatrack* the *Stroker* did wonderful Feats by laying his Hands upon those he cured : — That perhaps some subtil *effluvia* from the Hands of *Jesus*, or some *sanative Balsam*, or other Medicine he concealed in his Palms, might penetrate the Pores of the Woman's Skin, and contribute towards her Cure. Nay, (for there is no end of *cavilling* ;) his very pronouncing a certain Form of Words, (such as *Woman thou art loosed from thine Infirmary* ; thy *Faith hath made thee whole* ; or the like ;) might in a natural way help forward her Cure. The force of Sounds is prodigious and incomprehensible. We see they are successfully used in curing the poysonous Bite of a *Tarantula*. And *who knows*, but that the musical Voice and Words of *Jesus* might have a secret Influence and Energy in some of the extraordinary Cures he wrought ; and particularly in healing the crooked Woman ; by unbending her contracted Nerves, or bracing her relaxed Muscles ; giving a vigorous Motion to her animal Spirits, or the *liquidum nervorum* ; and inclining her to such brisk Motions as might not only make her erect and straight ; but even dispose her to leap and dance for Joy. I appeal now to you both Gentlemen, whether you do not often meet with as absurd and impertinent cavilling as this in Mr. *W.*'s Discourses : and whether you think that any Miracle or Fact whatever cou'd be so re-

See Disc. 4.
P. 14.

SECT. II.  lated as that it shou'd be put out of the Power of Infidels and Scepticks to *cavil* at it.

M. I find you know more of the Art of cavilling than I imagin'd.

N. Whatever Skill I have that way, I'm intirely indebted for it to your Friend. It is the only thing I learn't from his *Discourses*.

Joh. iv. T. I think the *Second* concludes with some Remarks upon the Story of the *Samaritan Woman*.

M. It does so : but I'm going to take a turn in the Garden ; and must leave you to vindicate the Invective that Mr. *W.* has form'd against that *graceless Whore*, and her *Fortune-teller*.

Disc. 1. p.
12.

T. He withdrew very seasonably : I see by your Countenance that you and he wou'd certainly have quarrell'd.

N. Who can bear such licentious Talk ? You see he is fond of those scurrilous shocking Expressions that any-one but Mr. *W.* wou'd be ashamed of : and takes all Opportunities of repeating his vile Reflections, and awkward Jests. One might bear with an artful Allusion, tho' somewhat Profane ; or even a spiteful Insinuation, when it falls naturally into any *Argument* or *Objection*, he uses. But really we find very little of this sort of Wit in Mr. *W.*'s *Discourses*. There is none at all in his profane Rant about the Woman of *Samaria*. *Jesus*, to convince her of his supernatural Knowledge, *told her all Things she ever did* ; (that is, many of the most secret Transactions of her *past* Life ;) which Mr. *W.* calls *telling her her Fortune*. And this poor senseless Jest, nauseously repeated, makes up his whole Invective. There is not one sprightly Thought in it ; nor one just Reflection :

on: nothing but *Falshood*, *Rancour*, and coarse, dull, profane *Buffoonry*. SECT. II.

T. You grow too warm, Sir.

N. His outrageous Provocation justifies the warmest Resentment; and cannot but raise the Indignation of every considerate Man. The more I think of Mr. W.'s Conduct, I'm the more amazed at it. He sometimes shows a little regard to Truth, Reason, and Decency: but at other times, he runs Riot to all the height of Distraction. It is hard that such Gentlemen will not be content with the Liberty they have to reject the Truth, and to *argue* against it as much as they will; unless they be allowed to ridicule it too, with Rage and Virulence. Our *Deists* grow *Zealots* for Infidelity: and nothing will please them but making Profelytes. For my own part, I'm very desirous to have every thing fairly stated and examin'd: and shou'd be glad to hear all the Arguments, Objections, and Cavils they can form. Only let them write and act like Men of Sense and Probity; who love the Truth; and impartially search after it. I do not fear the most vigorous Attacks that Infidels can possibly make upon the genuine Doctrines of the Gospel. The Truth will at last prevail, and support itself: and Error ought not to be defended.

T. I'm far from approving of Mr. W.'s Zeal against the *literal Sense* of Scripture: nor will I pretend to justify the Rashness and Imprudence of his Conduct. I cou'd wish there were no shocking Expressions in his *Discourses*. They do no service to the Cause he espouses; nor the least Prejudice to Christianity. His Objections wou'd have appear'd to greater Advantage, had they been proposed in a sober

SECT. II. decent manner. All that I'm concerned about is to have them fully answer'd.

N. Do you find any Weight in what he says about the Woman of *Samaria*?

T. Very little, I think.

N. I know not why he ranks our *Saviour's* Discourse with her among his *Miracles*. His telling her such secret Transactions of her past Life as she was sure he cou'd not learn from others was a Proof indeed of his being endued with supernatural Knowledge: but this is a Gift different from a miraculous Power; which, as far as we find, he never exerted among the *Samaritans*. So that this Passage of our Saviour's History is drag'd in without any Reason, merely to furnish Matter for licentious Mirth, and the coarsest Calumny. Pray, Sir, look into the close of his *second* Discourse, and see if you can find any Thing that deserves an Answer.

Disc. 2. p.
48.

T. " If such a broken, elliptical, and absurd Tale had been told of any other Impostor, the Wits of our Clergy had been at work to expose it plentifully: and indeed there is no need of much Wit to make this Tale nauseous and ridiculous to vulgar Understanding". — All this is Preamble. " All I shall do now is to make my Observations on the two uses that the Clergy very seriously put this Story to: and they are first, to prove the Expectation that there was among the *Samaritans* of a *Messiah* to come: and 2dly, to prove *Jesus's* Omniscience". — Or he cou'd not have enter'd into the Woman's Heart; — " As to the first of them, it is rightly from hence asserted, that the *Samaritans* had an Expectation of a *Messiah*. —

Ibid. p. 49.

N. Then

N. Then there needs no more to be said up- SECT. II.
on the first Point. 

T. If *Jesus's* telling the *Samaritan Woman* Disc. 2. p. 50.
all Things she ever did, be not a Proof of his
being the *Messiah*; St. *John* has told us an im-
pertinent Tale of a simple Woman.—

N. Ridiculous! was St. *John* obliged to re-
cord no thing concerning *Jesus* but what was
a real and conclusive Argument of his being
the *Messiah*? All his Actions and Discourses
were instructive; and that very Discourse with
the Woman of *Samaria* contains several Truths Joh. iv. 14.
21, 23, 34.
of great Importance.

T. If *Jesus's* telling her the most secret Pas-
sages of her Life was not a real Proof of his
being the *Messiah*; she was foolish and credu-
lous; and drew a false Conclusion.

N. From his declaring to her such private
Actions and Circumstances of her Life as she
might know he cou'd not possibly have heard
from others; she *perceived* and rightly con-
cluded that he was *a Prophet*. But it is un-
certain whether she intirely rely'd upon his own
Testimony that he was the *Messiah*. For when
she went to make a report to the Men of *Sy-
char* of his wonderful Knowledge; she spake
somewhat doubtfully of him; and only said;
*Come and see a Man which told me all Things
which I ever did; is not this the Christ?* She
seemed inclined to believe he was the *Messiah*;
not merely because she found he was endued
with supernatural Knowledge; (for that was
but one Character of the *Messiah* common to
him with other Prophets:) but because he
whom she perceived to be a Prophet, (and who
was not like to deceive her) had declared to her
that he *was* the *Messiah*. So that however great
her other Faults were, I see no Reason in this

SECT. II. Case to charge her either with Folly, or Credulity.

T. I'll grant she was not credulous, in Case she was *sure* that *Jesus* cou'd not possibly have got Information from others of those particulars he told her.

N. *She* was the best judge of that. And it seems she was so far from thinking he might possibly have his Intelligence in a natural Way; that she reckon'd the discovery he made to her of her past Actions, a sufficient Proof of his being a *Prophet*. However, if this were the only Proof that *Jesus* gave of his supernatural Knowledge, there might be some Pretence for such a Suspicion as you suggest. But seeing he gave many unquestionable Proofs of his being endued with divine Knowledge, by disclosing

See Sect. V. People's secret Thoughts, and foretelling Things that punctually happen'd according to his Predictions; there can be no Reason to suspect that he had his Knowledge of the Woman's Character and secret Actions, from others: especially considering that he was an utter Stranger in that Country where she liv'd; and was accidentally travelling to his-own: and that the *Jews* had no Correspondence nor Intercourse with the *Samaritans*. They wou'd not so much as show one another the common Offices of Civility; so inveterate were their mutual Prejudices.

T. If the *Jews* had no dealings with the *Samaritans*, how came *Jesus* and his Disciples to be so readily received by the Men of *Sychar*, and kindly entertain'd among them, for two Days?

N. Tho' *Jesus*'s Garb and Speech might be *Jewish*; they soon found by his humane, effable, and friendly Behaviour, and the subject of his Discourse,

See Sect. V.
P.

Joh. iv. 9.
Luk. ix. 52,
53.

Discourse, that tho' he was of *Jewish* Extraction, he had nothing of the *Jewish* Temper and Spirit in him. No doubt he repeated to the Men of *Sychar*, the same important Truths he had declar'd to the Woman: that *God is a Spirit*; and that he must be *worship't in Spirit and in Truth*: that he might now be thus worship't in all places alike: and that neither *Jerusalem*, nor *Mount Gerizim*, was any longer to be reckon'd the only acceptable Place of Worship. Such Doctrine cou'd not but convince them that he was not a *Jew*, either as to his Notions of Religion, or his Practice; his Temper, or his Conduct. They soon found that he was the *Messiah*, whom both the *Jews* and the *Samaritans* expected about that time; and that he was sent by Almighty God to reveal his Will to Mankind. So that they cou'd not refuse to give *Jesus* and his Disciples the kindest Reception: tho' they wou'd not have treated profess't rigid *Jews* with the least Respect; or have had any Dealings, or Communication with them.

T. Do you think, Sir, that *Christ's* declaring to the Woman some of the secret Actions of her Life, was a Proof of his *Omniscience*; as some have asserted?

N. No. It cou'd only prove that he had a supernatural Knowledge. But since such Knowledge might be communicated or reveal'd to him by Almighty God, as it was to some others; it cannot, I think, be reckon'd a Proof of *Jesus's* Omniscience.

T. Mr. W. observes, that tho' *Jesus* was forward enough to let the Woman know he was the *Messiah*; before wiser People he was unwilling to own it,

SECT. II.

Ch. x. 24.

v. 25.

Ch. vii. 13.

N. For Proof of this, he refers us to St. *John*; whose Words are these: “ Then came “ the *Jews* round about him, and said unto “ him, how long dost thou make us to doubt? “ If thou be the *Christ* (or the *Messiah*,) tell “ us plainly”. His Answer is this: *I told you [that I was the Messiah;] and ye believ’d [me] not: [but seeing you question my Testimony concerning myself;] the Works that I do in my Father’s Name, they bear Witness of me.* Sometimes indeed he charged his Disciples, and others whom he miraculously cured, not to divulge his being the *Messiah*; lest he shou’d have exasperated the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* too much; and have hasten’d his Death before he had finish’t his ministerial Office; and wrought the *Works of Him that sent him.* But on other Occasions, and particularly throughout the last Year of his Life, he freely own’d his being the *Messiah*. He assumed to himself the Title of *the Son of Man*, which was by the Prophet *Daniel* appropriated to the *Messiah*. He often spake of God under the Title of *the Father*: and called him *his Father*; and himself, *the Son of God*; which was another Name of the *Messiah*; and was understood by the High-Priests * to be an equivalent Expression.

T. Now you are grown pretty cool, Sir; I think you may venture to meet your Antagonist. If you please we’ll go and see for him.

N. I’ll wait upon you, Sir.

S E C T.

* See *Mat.* xxvi. 63. *Luk.* xxii. 67—70. and *Mark* xiv. 61, 62.—and compare *Joh.* i. 49. with *Matt.* xxvii. 41—43.

S E C T. III.

T. YOU seem to be weary, Mr. N. SECT. III.

N. Sitting in this cool Parlour with so fine a Prospect, is more agreeable to me than walking in the Heat of the Day.

T. You have talk't very well about the fructifying of *Vines*: let us hear what you think of the Blasting of *Fig-Trees*. I think that is the Subject that comes next before us. Mat. xxi. 19.
Mar. xi. 12.

M. *Jesus's cursing the Fig-Tree*, upon the bare mention of it, appears to be such an absurd, foolish and ridiculous, if not a malicious and ill-natured Act, that I question whether for Folly and Absurdity it can be equall'd by any Instance of the Life of a reputed wise Man. Disc. 3. p. 4.

N. When the first Appearance, or the obvious meaning of an Action done, or a Precept recommended, by a considerate Man, seems contrary to Reason, and inconsistent with his known Character, and his usual Conduct; we are naturally led to inquire into the true Design of such an uncommon Action, or Precept; and to look for some farther meaning than that which first presents itself. If the *literal* Sense of a Precept be absurd; we must prefer the *Figurative*. And if the obvious meaning of an Action be inconsistent with the Agent's Wisdom and Character; we are obliged, for the same Reason, to interpret it figuratively; and to look upon it as a moral Emblem, a practical Parable, or a typical Prophecy, that points out to us some farther Truth, or Instruction, than appears at first view. As to the Case
now

SECT. III. now before us, I need only remind you that such typical Actions, and prophetick Signs were well known to the *Jews*. *Jeremiah* and *Ezekiel* often used them to explain their Prophecys. And the Disciples of *Jesus* cou'd not easily mistake the Intent and Meaning of his blasting the Fig-Tree; because their Minds had, in a manner, been prepared for the right Apprehension of it, by the *Parable* of the *Fig-Tree* that he spake to them the Year before. You will find it, Mr. T. in the 12th or 13th Chapter of *St. Luke*. Pray read it.

T. It is in the 13th Chap. and 6th Verse.
 “ He spake also this Parable: A *certain Man*
 “ had a Fig-Tree planted in his Vineyard: and
 “ he came and sought Fruit thereon, and found
 “ none. Then said he unto the Dreffer of his
 “ Vineyard, behold these *three Years*, I [have]
 “ come seeking Fruit on this Fig-Tree, and
 “ find none: *cut it down*; why cumbereth
 “ it the Ground? And he answering, said unto
 “ him, Lord, let it alone *this Year* also, till I
 “ shall dig about it, and dung it; and if it
 “ bear Fruit, well: *but* if not, then after that,
 “ thou shalt cut it down”.

N. The meaning of this Parable is very plain. The fruitless Nation of the *Jews* was represented by the barren Fig-Tree, that was to be cut down. The Lord of the Vineyard pronounces its Doom. *Christ* who had the Care of it, intreats for only *one Year's* Tryal more, that he might give it the last Culture; and by his Preaching, his Miracles, and his Example, endeavour to convert and improve that barren obstinate Nation. And if it shou'd still continue impenitent and fruitless, he consented to its Excision. When he spake this Parable, he had employed about *three Years* of his Ministry in
 Preaching

Preaching the Gospel among the *Jews* (whom *Isaiah* called the Lord's *Vineyard*;) and had but little Fruit among them. And the last Year's Labour he bestowed upon them was still unsuccessful. Therefore, upon seeing a *Fig-Tree* by the Way-side, with *Leaves* only, and *no Fruit*; (which was a very natural and lively Emblem of a People that only made a shew of Piety, without the Fruits and Effects of it;) he took occasion to illustrate and confirm the foregoing Parable by blasting the fruitless Tree; to let his Disciples know that the final Excision and Destruction, of the *Jewish* Nation, with their City and Temple, was now *determin'd*. There is such a manifest Connection between the blasting of the *Fig-Tree*; and the Parable to which it directly Points; and such a surprizing coincidence of Time, Persons, and other Circumstances; that the blasting of the fruitless Tree was a plain Completion of the *prophetick* Parable; and a farther warning and assurance given to the *Jews*, by a Miracle, that *Christ's* repeated Prophecys of their Destruction, shou'd in due time be accomplish't.

M. Tho' in other Cases you cry out against typical and allegorical Interpretations; here you chuse to strain your Invention for some mystical meaning of this extravagant Action of *Jesus*, in cursing the *Fig-Tree*.

N. I have already shown you that the *true* meaning of that Action is very *obvious*; and that our typical Interpretation of it is *natural* and just. We find that not only Fables, Emblems, Symbols, and Allegorys, but typical Actions, were used and understood among the *Eastern* Nations, as well as *figurative* Expressions: and in many Cases they were thought more proper than mere *Words*, to call up People's

SECT. III.



ple's Attention, and make a deeper Impression upon their Minds. As for the *Jews*, all their external Acts of Worship were evidently typical and figurative : so that this way of Instruction was from the very first become natural and familiar to them. And, I think, no-one who considers their Form of Worship ; the typical Actions used by their Prophets ; *Christ's* usual way of instructing them by *Parables* ; and the manifest Relation that his blasting the Fig-Tree has to one of these Parables ; can possibly doubt of the true Meaning and Design of that Action. If *Jesus* instead of blasting the Fig-Tree had gone about the Streets of *Jerusalem* at Noon-Day with a Torch, or Lantern, in his Hand, looking for a *Man* ; what wild work wou'd you have made of an Action that is seemingly so absurd and extravagant ! how wittily wou'd you have inveighed against such a *foolish and ridiculous* Prank, as lighting a Candle at Noon to see if he cou'd find *any* Man, when he saw a *Croud* in the Streets ! This wou'd have been reckon'd a Demonstration of Madness, according to the *Letter* of the Story. And the Moral, or *Mystical* Meaning of it wou'd have been represented as most *malicious* and *ill-natur'd*. But seeing it was done by a Heathen Philosopher ; all is right. There is Good-sense, and Instruction in it ; and the very Spirit of Wit and Satyr.

T. I can see no room for such a typical Construction as you wou'd put upon *Jesus's* cursing the Fig-Tree : for, in that view, it cou'd only *bint* obscurely at a Point of Instruction, or a Prophecy that he afterwards delivered in the *plainest* manner. But you cannot reasonably suppose he wou'd work a Miracle merely

Mat. xxiii.

35—39.

Ch. xxiv.

2, and 29.

merely to represent a Truth, or Event, that he afterwards more clearly foretold. SECT. III.

N. The Miracle of blasting the Fig-Tree was not done merely to illustrate and represent the Truth of the Prophecy concerning the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, (for that he did both by Parables before, and more plainly afterward;) but to ascertain and confirm the Truth of that Prophecy. And tho' the typical Action of blasting the Fig-Tree did not represent and foretel the Destruction of the *Jews* so fully and clearly as *Jesus* did afterwards in his Discourse: this can be no Argument against the typical Application of that Miracle. For, we find the Prophets sometimes used the same Method of introducing, and illustrating their plainest Predictions, by typical Actions. Thus *Ezekiel* Ch.xxiv. 15. did—I'll read you his-own Words. “The
“ Word of the Lord came unto me saying, Son
“ of Man, behold I take away from thee, the
“ desire of thine Eyes with a stroke: yet thou
“ shalt neither mourn nor weep—cover not
“ thy Lips; and eat not the Bread of Men.
“ So I spake unto the People in the Morning:
“ and at Even my Wife dyed; and I did [next]
“ Morning as I was commanded. And the
“ People said unto me, wilt thou not *tell us*
“ *what* these Things are *to us*, that thou dost
“ so? Then I answer'd them, the Word of the
“ Lord came unto me saying,—behold I will
“ profane my Sanctuary, the Excellency of
“ your Strength, *the desire of your Eyes*—and
“ your Sons and Daughters whom ye have
“ left shall fall by the Sword. And ye shall
“ do as I have done—ye shall not mourn nor
“ weep: but ye shall pine away for your Iniquitys; and mourn one towards another:
“ thus *Ezekiel* is unto you a Sign”, [or
Type.]

SECT. III.

Ch. xiii.
xix. xxiv.

Ver. 19.

Type.] Here was a typical Action, us'd to introduce a very plain Prophecy. And we find the same Method used by *Jeremiab*. It seems indeed to have been the usual way of delivering their Prophecys. For when the People observ'd *Ezekiel's* uncommon Behaviour, after his Wife's Death; they knew it was typical, and instructive; and that it related to *them*: therefore they said to him, *Wilt thou not tell us what these Things are* [or, represent] *to US that thou dost so?* A *Sadducee* might have found here as much subject for an Invective, as you do in the Case of *Christ's* blasting the Fig-Tree. He might have insulted the poor Prophet for his *foolish ridiculous* Actions; and charg'd him with *Ill-nature*, and *Inhumanity*, in being no more affected with his Wife's Death, than if she had been an utter Stranger to him. But the People knew the Prophet's good Character; and finding his Conduct on this occasion to be seemingly inconsistent with it; they were necessarily led to look beyond the outward Appearance of his Behaviour; and to inquire for the hidden meaning of it; and the Prophecy it was design'd to introduce and explain. And in the same manner ought we to interpret our Saviour's Action of blasting the Fig-Tree, if we wou'd judge of it according to the Rules of Candour and Equity.

M. Why don't you allegorically interpret, and apply other Miracles of our Saviour as well as this?

N. Because there is nothing in his other Miracles that can lead us to such a typical Application of them. The Reason and Design of them appears at first Sight: and therefore we look no farther for any moral or figurative Meaning. But if we rest in the outward and first Appearance of this Action, without
any

any farther view, it seems to be absurd in itself, and inconsistent with the Character of *Jesus*, and that Wisdom which is conspicuous in the other Parts of his Conduct.

SECT. III.



M. The *Evangelists* shou'd have made this Distinction for you; and have told us which Miracles are to be allegorized, and mystically applied; and which are not: else we are to allegorize all, or none of them.

Disc. 3. p. 19.

N. You might with as much Reason argue that we ought either to interpret all the Scripture *literally*, or all of it *figuratively*: because the sacred Writers have not made any Distinction for us; nor told us which Expressions are to be figuratively understood; and which are not. Reason and Common-sense direct us sufficiently in making such a Distinction. Thus when our Saviour approved of such as had the Gift of Continence, and were able to *make themselves* (as it were) *Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven*; any-one might easily perceive that he did not recommend Castration, but a chaste Celibacy; as what was most expedient for Christians in a State of Persecution and *Distress*. And it is surprizing that *Origen* who allegorized the plainest Facts, shou'd have understood that Passage in the *literal* Sense, and practis'd accordingly. He had just as much Reason to *cut-off his right Hand*, or pluck out his right Eye; when they insnared him. So in the Case before us, it is manifestly absurd to rest in the first Appearance, or the outward Action, of *Christ's* blasting the Fig-Tree. Passion Resentment, or Impatience (to which Mr. *W.* imputes it,) were as contrary to his Character, as Darkness is to Light. We ought therefore to conclude that it was not Figs that he wanted; but that he really *hunger'd after the Righteousness* of the

Matt. xix. 12.

See 1 Cor. vii. 7, 26, 36.

SECT. III. *Jews*; and long'd to see the Fruits of Repentance among them: and that, by blasting the barren Tree, he plainly meant to foretel, and confirm, the Ruin and Destruction of that fruitless impenitent People.

M. If any other Person shou'd curse a Tree for not bearing Fruit, you wou'd reckon him very passionate and foolish.

N. To judge aright of Actions we must view them in all the extent of their Circumstances; and particularly consider the Character of the Agent. If any other Person but a confess't Prophet had gone about, with a wooden *Bond and Yoke* upon his Neck, as *Jeremiah* did, the *Jews* wou'd have thought him mad. But they knew that he was commanded to do that typical Action, in order to illustrate his Prophecy, and rouse up their Attention. When "*Ezekiel*

*Jer. xxvii.
2. xxviii. 10.*

*Ch. xii. 6.
11.*

"brought forth his Household-stuff by Day
"in their Sight, as stuff for removing; and at
"Even dug thro' the Wall with his Hand, and
"brought it forth in the Twilight; and bare it
"upon his Shoulders in their Sight"; they were not surpriz'd at his Behaviour; tho' in any other Person it wou'd have seem'd unaccountable. They knew that he was *set for a Sign*, (or Type) *to the House-of-Israel*. The Lord order'd him to say to them, "*I am your Sign: like as I have done, so shall it be done unto you: they shall remove and go into Captivity*". In order to determine whether an Action be good, or bad; right, or wrong; discreet, or foolish; we must consider not only the End and Design of it, but all its various Circumstances. And in all difficult Cases, we ought to judge candidly; and to put such a Construction upon a doubtful Act, or Expression, as is most consistent with Equity, and with the known Character of the Person.

As

As to the Case in Hand, what you call *curſing* the Fig-Tree was really *deſtroying* it: which is the fate that barren Fruit-Trees meet with daily. And thoſe who deſtroy them cannot be tax'd with *Folly*, or *Paſſion*, for it, by any but ſuch as have neither Temper, nor Wiſdom.

M. Divines when they pleaſe make *Jeſus* the moſt patient, reſign'd, and eaſy under Sufferings, Troubles, and Diſappointments, of any Man. If he really was ſo, he cou'd hardly have been ſo much out of Humour, for want of a few Figs to allay his Hunger.

N. In the Gospels *Jeſus* appears evidently to have been the moſt patient, mild, and diſpaſſionate Perſon that ever lived. For Proof of this we appeal to all his Actions. How patiently did he endure Hunger, and Toil and Pain; and (what is much harder to bear) Diſgrace, unjuſt Reproaches, and all the various Troubles he was daily expoſed to? How humble, and meek, and ſubmiſſive was he under the higheſt Injurys and Provocations! How calm, and mild, and forgiving towards *Judas* who betrayed him; and thoſe who ſeized, reviled, and tormented him! How reſign'd and patient under falſe Accuſations, Mockery, and Inſults; when he was ſcourg'd, ſpit-on, crown'd with Thorns, reviled, pierced, crucify'd, and put to Death, with all the terrible Circumſtances of Pain, Ignominy, and Anguiſh! What then can be more abſurd than to ſuppoſe that He cou'd be out of Humour, and act fooliſhly and paſſionately, merely for want of a few Figs to allay his Hunger? His real Hunger at that time cou'd not be great. It was in the Morning that he blaſted the Fig-Tree: and he had walk't but a little way; not two Miles, which is the whole Diſtance betwixt *Bethany* and *Jeruſalem*.

SECT. III.

Diſc. 3. p. 5.

Mat. xxi. 18.

SECT. III. This consideration alone wou'd determin any candid Person to understand our Saviour's *hungering*, in that figurative and * spiritual Sence, in which he sometimes used that *term*. Now since his real Hunger on this occasion cou'd be but little; it is most absurd to think it cou'd render *him* peevish, or impatient, who was remarkable for Abstemiousness; and used easily to bear the longest fasting, and the most importunate Cravings of Appetite. To say nothing of his miraculous Fasting in the Wilderness, I shall only put you in mind that when

Joh. iv. 6. he was weary with travelling towards Sychar, he sat down by a Well-side, and refresh't himself with drinking a little Water. And when his Disciples press't him to eat of the Provisions they had brought him from a neighbouring City, he was so far from being impatient with Hunger, or eager to satisfy his Appetite, that he seem'd to slight their offer; and told them he had *Meat to eat that they knew not of*. And when they mistook his meaning, and fancied that some Person had brought him Food; he undeceived them, saying, that his *Meat* (his support and chief Pleasure) *was to do the Will of Him that sent him, and to finish his Work*.

Ver. 34.

M. It seems he was not always so intirely contented with his spiritual Food: for when he was disappointed of his Figs, he grew peevish and impatient; and *curst* the Fig-Tree.

N. *Curst* the Fig-Tree is the Burden of Mr. W.'s Invektive in this Case; as *Fortune-telling* was in the former. But, pray tell me why you are so particularly fond of the Phrase of *curst* the Tree?

M. It is used by one of the *Evangelists*.

N. How-

* See *Matt.* v. 6. *Joh.* iv. 14. *Ch.* vi. 35. 51. 53.

N. However it means no more than *blasting* the Tree. You know it cannot possibly mean more. But I'm afraid Mr. *W.* was the more pleased with this ambiguous Word, and repeated it the oft'ner, because he thought it wou'd convey to vulgar Understandings the concomitant Ideas of *Revenge, Rage, Passion,* and *Impatience* from which CURSING (according to the usual Sence of the Word) and *Swearing,* and *Execrations* proceed. If it was not to give the thoughtless Vulgar such a false Notion of *cursing* the *Fig-Tree*, why did he call it an *Act of Execration*? And why did he, without the least Colour of Reason, assert that *Christ's* blasting the *Fig-Tree* was the effect of *Passion, Resentment,* and *Impatience*? He only said, *Let no Fruit grow on thee henceforward.*—These Words, no doubt, were spoken, (at least for any thing you know, they might have been utter'd) with all the Calmness imaginable, and the mildest Accent. There is nothing in them, nor in any thing the *Evangelists* say on this Occasion, that can lead you to think *Jesus* was in the least *impatient,* or *out of Humour*; and far less that he broke out into a *violent Fit of Passion*, as your Friend falsely asserts.

Disc. 3. p. 9.

M. When a Man acts as if he were in a *Passion*, we cannot but conclude that he really is so. And if *Jesus* was frustrated of a long'd-for Meal of Figs, to satisfy his Hunger; what need he have reveng'd the Disappointment on the senseless and faultless *Tree*?

Ibid. p. 5.

N. We ought never to judge according to the mere Appearances of Things; but shou'd consider their true Nature and Design. I shew'd you before the true reason of *Christ's* blasting the *Fig-Tree*; and that it was design'd to be a typical Representation of the Destruction that

SECT. III. was soon to overtake the impenitent *Jews*. Since the Fig-Tree was *senseless* and *faultless*, they must be equally *senseless* who do not see, that it was upon another sort of Tree chiefly that the Sentence of Destruction was pronounc'd; even that *Green Tree* which * *Ezekiel* foretold, the Lord wou'd *dry up*, and blast, at the same time that he made the *dry and wither'd Tree* (which represented the *Gentiles*) to *flourish*.

Ibid. M. Perhaps *Jesus* was forced to fast longer than was usual and expedient: and being hungry, the Disappointment provok'd him.

N. He was so far from fasting longer than was usual, that he cou'd not be said to have fasted at all: and it must have been a very moderate degree of Hunger that he then felt. But his Fasts whenever they happen'd, were always voluntary; and cou'd never be forced upon him. If he had been in the most desert Place, he cou'd miraculously have created Bread for himself and his Company, as easily as he multiply'd or increas'd the *Lodges* for thousands in the Wilderness. So that there never cou'd be any possible occasion for his being out of Humour for want of Food. Since he evidently shewed that he had Power to provide Bread for others on a sudden, it must be the effect of the blindest Prejudice, and unaccountable Perverseness to fancy that he cou'd not supply his-own Necessitys: or, that tho' he cou'd supply them, yet a little present Want, or seeming Disappointment cou'd make him lose his Temper; and break out into a violent Fit of Passion. A Miracle wrought in a Passion is a most ridiculous and inconsistent Supposition.

Mar. xi. 13. M. The worst of all is, that the time of Figs was not yet, when *Jesus* look't for them. Now did ever any-one hear or read of any thing more unreasonable

* See *Ezek.* xvii. 24. and compare *Rom.* xi. 11—25.

reasonable than for a Man to expect Fruit out of Season. SECT. III.

N. This, I own, has some Appearance of an Objection. Several answers have been given to it. But I shall insist only upon that which seems the most satisfactory. Before I mention it however, it may be proper to put you in mind that tho' the most common sort of Figs in *Judæa* were not ripe till towards the Beginning of *September*; some forward Fig-Trees yielded ripe Fruit twice in the Year; once about the beginning of *April*; and again about the end of *August*. But it is uncertain whether all the early Figs were of the same Years growth; or whether most of them did not hang on the Trees all the foregoing Winter. However there certainly used to be such early Figs ripe at the time when *Jesus* blasted the Fig-tree for its unfruitfulness *. This being premised I think the *Evangelist's* Words *οὐ γὰρ ἦν καιρὸς σύκων*, shou'd be render'd thus; *for it was not a [kindly] Season for Figs*†. Some Years are kindly and favourable to Fruit-Trees: and then they produce a plenty of Fruit. And at other times there is a general failure of some sorts of Fruit; so that most Trees produce but little; and many, none at all. Now it is probable that when *Jesus* look't for early Figs, it was not a kindly Season for them; or what we may call a Fig-Year. That this is St. *Mark's* true meaning seems the more likely, because if he had spoken of the ordinary Season of Figs; or the usual Time for gathering them, he wou'd probably have said, *οὐ καιρὸς*: for, *καιρὸς*, without the Article, seems rather to denote a [fit] Season, or a kindly Year. Besides, tho' in our common Version, it is said, *for the time of Figs was not yet*: the last Word [yet] is supply'd

† See Dr. Hammond on Mark xi. 13.

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by

* See, the Miracles of *Jesus* vindicated. Part 3. p. 6—11.

SECT. III. by the Translators. The *Evangelist* only says *οὐ γὰρ ἦν καιρὸς σύρων*, *it was not a [kindly] Season* (or, *Year*) *for Figs*. This is a good Reason why *Jesus* found nothing upon the Tree but *Leaves*. So that this Interpretation of the Place renders the Connection and Sence of the whole Verse natural, easy, and consistent: whereas the other Constructions of it suppose such a forced Transposition, or Perplexity in the Sence, as is never to be admitted without the utmost Evidence and Necessity.

M. All the Interpretations of this Passage that I have seen, are equally forced, except the plain and obvious one: which is, that *it was not then the time of Figs*. But supposing St. *Mark* meant what you pretend, that it was not a kindly Season for Figs: *Jesus* cou'd not be ignorant of a Fact that the least Observation might have discover'd. But if he knew it was not a Fig-Year, and that there was no reason to expect any Fruit on the Fig-Tree; why did he go out of his way, pretending to look for Figs on a Tree that he knew did not then bear any.

N. Tho' he knew there was no Fruit upon the Tree, it was right and proper for him to show his Disciples this; and to convince them that the wicked Nation of the *Jews* shou'd as certainly be destroyed, as they then saw the Fig-Tree blasted, for its Unfruitfulness. Indeed he was so far from being disappointed at his not finding any Fruit on the Fig-Tree, that his knowing there was none, is the very Reason why he went to it. And if there had been any Figs upon it, it is not likely he wou'd have gone one Step out of his way on this Occasion: because a Tree with Fruit upon it, cou'd not have been a proper Symbol or Type of a wicked fruitless People; whose certain Destruction he design'd

design'd to represent, and confirm, by the miraculous blasting of a fruitless Tree. SECT. III.

M. I wou'd gladly know whose the Fig-Tree was : and whether *Jesus* had any right to the Fruit, if haply he had found any upon it ; or any Leave or Authority to smite it with a Curse for its Unfruitfulness. The Tree cou'd not be his Property : for he was so far from being either Landlord or Tenant, that he own'd he had no where to lay his Head.

N. It is uncertain whether the Fig-Tree had any Owner at all : perhaps it grew on some Common or Waste, through which the Highway to *Jerusalem* lay. St. *Matthew* tells us, that *Jesus* saw the Fig-Tree in the way, or by the way-side. And tho' St. *Mark* says, that he saw it afar off ; yet it must be so near as that he cou'd see it was a Fig-Tree ; and know it by its Leaves. Besides, * *μακρόθεν* is used by the Evangelists to signify, at some little Distance. And if the Tree grew close by the way-side, *Jesus* might have perceived it, and taken Notice of it to his Disciples, before he came up to it. But (2.) if the Tree belong'd to any Person, *Jesus* might know him, and fairly presume upon his Consent to its being blasted. It might belong to his Friend *Lazarus* who lived at *Bethany*, not far from the Place where the Fig-Tree grew. From several Circumstances recorded of him and his Sisters, it appears that he was a Man of Figure, and of great Substance ; who was as likely to be Owner of the Fig-Tree (if it had one) as any other Person. (3.) *Jesus* might know that the Tree had always been barren : and then supposing it belong'd to some unknown Person, there cou'd be no

* *Matt.* xxvi. 58. *Ch.* xxvii. 55. *Luk.* xviii. 13. *Ch.* xxiii. 49. *Mar.* xiv. 54.

SECT. III.  no Injury done him : because such a fruitless Tree cou'd be fit for nothing but the Fire : and it was certainly fitter for burning after it was blasted and wither'd, than before. (4.) Whether the Fig-Tree grew on the Common, or belong'd to some particular Person, *Jesus* need-ed not the express Leave of any-one to eat of the Fruit, if he had found any : for, by the *Jewish* Law, Travellers might eat of Grapes in any Vineyard, or pluck the Ears of standing Corn. And by an equitable Construction the same Precept was extended to all other Fruits. (5.) If *Jesus* had not a *legal* Right and Authority to blast the Tree, he had a *Divine* One which is better. And he proved this superior Right by the Miracles he wrought ; which evidently shewed that he came from God ; since no Person cou'd do such Miracles, unless he were endued with a Divine Power and Authority.

Deut. xxiii.
24, 25.

M. Your Answer is founded chiefly upon precarious Suppositions.

N. Each of them is at least as *probable* as the contrary : and any one of them fully answers your Objection. The *Evangelists* determin nothing plainly either way. And in all doubtful Cases, it is a Maxim of Law and Equity, that we ought to put the most favourable Construction upon People's Words and Actions ; and rather *suppose* them to be *right* and *lawful*, than unjust. There was therefore no occasion for the *Evangelists* to leave any thing upon Record for vindicating *Jesus* against such a groundless Imputation as is contrary to his known Character. No thing can be more unreasonable than to suspect *him* of Injustice, who in the whole Course of his Actions manifestly show'd the greatest Integrity, an universal Kindness, and the

the utmost Beneficence to all whom he convers'd with.

SECT. III.



M. If *Jesus* instead of *curfing* the Fig-Tree, had made a dry and wither'd one immediately to bud, flourish, and revive; and in an instant to bring forth ripe Fruits, out of Season; such an Instance of his Power had been an indisputable Miracle: it wou'd have carry'd Goodness along with it; and been a Proof of his being *Lord of the Creation*, and Author of the Fruits of the Earth.

Disc. 3. p. 10.

N. He proved this sufficiently by many unquestionable Instances of such a Divine Power as visibly display'd his Goodness; by healing all manner of Diseases; making the languid, sound; and the feeble, strong; and even *reviving* the *Dead*; and making *dry* and *wither'd* Limbs, fresh and vigorous: which are far greater Tokens of Divine Goodness, than making a dry and dead *Tree* to revive and flourish. But if *Jesus* had made a dry and wither'd *Tree* to flourish, and bring forth ripe Fruit; you wou'd have rank't such a Story among your monstrous *Incredibilitys*; and have believ'd it just as much as you believe the budding, *blossoming* and Fruitfulness of *Aaron's Rod*.

Num. xvii.

M. In my Opinion, *Jesus's* cursing the Fig-Tree spoils the Credit, and sullys the Glory of his other Miracles. It is in its own Nature of such a malevolent Aspect, that it is enough to make us suspect his Beneficence in his other Works.

Disc. 3. p. 11.

N. In that Action there appears nothing that is in the least contrary to the Wisdom, Integrity, and Goodness which *Jesus* showed in all his Conduct: or that can any-way lessen the Credit of his other Miracles. Nay, all your Friend's spiteful outragious Invective on this Subject,

SECT. III.


 Disc: 3. p.
11.

Subject, might with equal Reason be pointed against the Providence and Goodness of God himself. For when Trees are blasted, or rent by Thunder and Lightning; or when Corn is blighted or mildew'd; or Cattle are smitten with mortal Distempers; Infidels and Atheists may pretend that such effects of Divine Providence *are in themselves of such a malevolent Aspect,* as leads them to *suspect that* Justice, Wisdom, and *Beneficence* of God, which *seem to be manifested in his other Works:* and to *question whether there may not be some latent Poyson and diabolical Design under the Colour of his fairer Pretences to an Almighty Power,* and absolute Dominion over his Creatures. They might say, that the Conduct of Providence in the fore-mentioned Cases *is so like the malignant Practices of Devils or of Witches who* (as Storys go) *upon Envy, Grudge, or Distaste, smite their Neighbours Cattle with languishing Distempers till they die; that it is hard, if not impossible to distinguish one from the other, in Spite and Malice.* In fine, they might add, that *the Spirit of God, who is all Love and Mercy, shou'd (one wou'd think) breathe forth nothing but Goodness and Kindness to Mankind; but that such a pestilential Blast as often comes from a mortiferous North-East Wind, in some Seasons, shou'd proceed from his gracious Providence; to the Destruction of People's harmless Trees, and inoffensive Corn and Cattle is what none upon Earth can account for.* Your Friend cou'd not but see whither such blasphemous Insinuations as these do necessarily tend: and he best knows with what view they were suggested.

M. This retorting of an Objection is only a more dextrous way of fencing, and putting-by a home-thrust. If you will be drawing unto-ward

ward Consequences from what We advance, SECT. III.
 you must get rid of them as well as you can. 

At present I chuse to go on with other Objections. Now tho' I have hitherto supposed *Christ's cursing the Fig-Tree* to be a Miracle; yet after all, it may be question'd, whether this Work was really miraculous: and whether Disc. 3. p. 14.
 there was not more of the Craft of Man, than of the Power of God in it. St. *Matthew* indeed says, that the Fig-Tree *presently* wither'd away. But this *presently* is an indeterminate time; and may be understood of a Day, or a Week, or two, as well as of the Moment in which these Words were spoken, *Let no Fruit grow on thee henceforward*. St. *Mark* says, that in the *Morning* as the Disciples passed by, *they saw the Fig-Tree dry'd up from the Roots*, which was at least the Day after the *Curse* was utter'd: so that there was certainly twenty-four Hours for its withering. And tho' it is said that the Tree *dry'd up from the Roots*; this does not imply that the Trunk of it perish't, or was reduc'd to nothing; but only that the Green Leaves of the whole, and of every part of it, were in a withering Condition. And might not all this be done without a Miracle? What if *Jews* and Infidels shou'd say that *Jesus* being minded to *impose* on his *Disciples* and Followers, took a secret opportunity before-hand to lay his *Carpenter's Ax* to the Root of this Tree, and so imperceptibly circumcised it, as that the Leaves did (as they easily might) wither in a Night and a Day's time?

N. Seeing you have misrepresented the Fact, I must state it right, before I consider the surprising Conclusion you draw from it. I grant that *ωαρεχεννα* is once used in the Gospels for Luk. xix. 11.
 an indeterminate time, to signify *very soon*, or
suddenly:

SECT. III. *suddenly*: but in all other Places the Context plainly shows it must be understood to mean *instantly*, or *immediately*, in the *strictest* Sense. What the Disciples observ'd, and marvelled at next Morning, as they return'd that way, was that the Tree was *so soon wither'd away*; or according to St. Mark, *dry'd up from the Roots*. Now the least that this strong Expression can mean is, not only that all *the green Leaves of it* were in a *withering Condition*, as you express it; but that there was not a green Leaf to be seen upon it; for that it was become a *sapless Trunk*, with *wither'd Leaves*, and *dead Branches*. And this state it might have been brought to, within a Minute after that *Jesus* had blasted it.

M. How cou'd that be, when St. Mark tells us it was in the Morning after, as the Disciples pass'd by, that they saw the Fig-Tree dry'd up. This shows that there was at least four and twenty Hours for its withering.

N. That does not follow. The Fig-Tree might have wither'd many Hours before the Disciples had an Opportunity of observing it. It is likely that as soon as *Jesus* said, *let no Fruit grow on thee for ever*; it began *immediately* to wither away, as St. Matthew affirms; tho' they might not perceive it. Seeing they were only passing-by, it cannot be supposed that they stay'd one Moment by the Tree where they had nothing to do; but rather that they left the Place *immediately*; and went on to *Jerusalem*: and so cou'd not observe the Tree's being withered, till next Morning. So far then it is from being true that *there was certainly 24 Hours for its withering*; that probably it had wither'd 24 Hours before they observ'd it. St. Matthew's Words favour this Supposition: and there is nothing appears to the contrary in St. Mark.

M. You

M. You have only suppos'd the Truth of the Miracle; instead of vindicating it against the Objection I urg'd; namely, that *Jesus* might before-hand take a secret Opportunity to cut the Root of the Tree, so as that it might wither in a Night and a Day's time. SECT. III. 

N. Since you had misrepresented some Circumstances of the Fact; it was necessary for me to state it fairly, before I cou'd inquire whether it was truly miraculous, or not. I come now to Answer your Objection. And, (1.) in the Character of *Jesus* there appears nothing like Guile, or Fraud: but on all occasions his Conduct was upright, open, and candid. Most of his Miracles were of such a Nature; they were done in such publick Places, and before such a Number of Witnesses (often in presence of his most watchful and subtle Enemys;) that it was impossible there shou'd be any Craft, Mistake, or Collusion in them. Now it is absurd to think that any Person wou'd have recourse to Fraud, who was endu'd with a divine Power, and cou'd more easily effect his Designs by a fair and open Conduct. But *Jesus* showed, by many unquestionable Miracles, that he had a divine Power, which enabled him to do more astonishing Things than blasting the Fig-Tree: *therefore*, it is absurd to think that in this (or any other) Case he wou'd have recourse to Fraud. (2.) Mere Possibilities, and wild Suppositions, that have no Colour of Reason to support them, can never be allow'd to overthrow plain Facts that are well attested. So that admitting there were a Possibility of Fraud in the Case of blasting the Fig-Tree; that cou'd not lessen the Credibility of the Miracle; nor incline any prudent Person to call the Truth of it in question. For, in most Cases and Transactions of Life, where, human

SECT. III. human Testimony must be rely'd on, there is (and necessarily must be) a Possibility either of *Fraud*, or *Mistake*: and yet all wise People rely as firmly upon that sort of Evidence which the Nature of Things will admit of, as if they had an *absolute* Certainty of what they believe; and were *infallibly sure* that they cou'd not possibly be deceived. You must therefore either lay it down as a general Rule of judging, and acting, in all Cases of Moment, that the mere Possibility of *Deception* (thro' the *Mistake*, or *Craft* of others) is a sufficient Reason for disbelieving, or questioning all things that we ourselves have not *seen* or *heard*: (which wou'd at once destroy all human Testimony; introduce the utmost Confusion into the World; and make all Correspondence and Society impracticable:) Or, you must grant that Things may be prudently and firmly believed, upon sufficient Evidence; tho' absolutely speaking, there may be a Possibility of *Fraud*, or *Mistake*, either as to the first Transactions, (or Things themselves,) or in the conveying of them to us, by human (that is, by *fallible*) Testimony. But (3.) the Instance of *Fraud* that you suggest to be possible, supposes the Concurrence of such improbable and inconsistent Circumstances, as in the Nature of Things seems to be morally impossible.

M. Now you come home to the Point. You are to prove then, that *Jesus* cou'd not secretly cut the Roots of the Fig-Tree, the Night before he pretended to curse it; so as that it shou'd wither within 24 Hours; and his Disciples know nothing of the *Fraud*.

N. The Supposition of such a *Fraud* will appear absurd and incredible to any-one who considers the following Particulars. (1.) From the whole History of the Gospel it appears that
his

his Disciples, or some of them at least, were always with him, and attended him wherever he went; except during the short time that he sent them to preach in the Towns and Villages of *Judæa*. And on the present Occasion particularly, St. *Mark* tells us, that the Evening before the Fig-Tree was blasted; (that very Evening, or Night, in which you must suppose that *Jesus* secretly cut the Roots of the Tree;) all his Disciples went with him from *Jerusalem* to *Bethany*: so that he cou'd not have had any opportunity of committing such a secret Fraud, without their perceiving it. And if he had wanted such an opportunity, he wou'd not have brought his *twelve* Disciples with him to *Bethany*; but wou'd have left most of them at *Jerusalem*; whither he was to return the next Morning. (2.) Since the Fig-Tree grew near the high Road that led to *Jerusalem*; it seems altogether incredible that the Earth or Mould about the Tree cou'd be removed, and laid together again; (which requires a *Spade* as well as an *Ax*,) and that the largest Roots of it shou'd be secretly cut without any Noise; and so imperceptibly, (tho' it must have been done in the dark,) as that the Disciples (when they came, with *Jesus*, to the Fig-Tree, in the Morning,) shou'd not observe that the Grass around the Root of the Tree was gone, and that the Mould had been but just removed, and laid together again. (3.) Seeing all this must have been done the Night before; that is, several Hours before *Jesus* and his Disciples came to the Tree; it must already have begun to wither very sensibly. For all the larger Roots of it must have been cut; otherwise it cou'd not (in a natural Way, as Mr. W.

SECT. III.

Acts i. 21.

Mar. iii. 14.

Mar. xi. 11.

Ver. 20. &

27.

H

supposes)

SECT. III. supposes) be quite wither'd in twenty-four Hours. And if all the larger Roots were cut, several Hours before the Disciples saw the Tree, they cou'd not but have perceiv'd the Leaves of it to be already in a withering Condition; considering the vast Power, and scorching Heat of the Sun, and the very warmth of the Air, in so hot a Climate as *Judæa*, near the time of the *Passover*, when some of the Fruits of the Earth were already ripe. Now it is absurd to imagin that *Jesus* cou'd have pretended miraculously to blast a Tree, which, in the Circumstances you suppose it, must already have begun to wither sensibly, when they came to view it. In fine, the Supposition of a Fraud here is attended with so many Absurditys and Inconsistencys, that to every unbiass't Person it must appear morally impossible.

See Lev.
xxiii. 15.
Deut. xvi.
v. 9.

M. I grant that the executing such a Fraud must have been attended with great Difficultys. And all you have said can prove no more.

N. I have proved not only that it must have been extremely difficult; but that if it had been attempted, it must *unavoidably* have been *discover'd*: which, I think, is a Demonstration that *Christ's* imposing upon his Disciples, by such a Fraud as you suppose, was morally impossible.

Disc. 3. p.
15.

M. We need not dispute about the Possibility of it: for, indeed I am so far from thinking there was any such Fraud in this supposed Miracle of *Jesus*, that I don't believe it was at all done according to the *Letter*. And for this we have not only a clear and intrinsic Proof from the Story itself, but from the Authority of the Fathers. But seeing, you show

no

no regard to that; I desire it may be consider'd SECT. III.
whether it be not as reasonable in itself to
take what the three *Evangelists* write of this
Fig-Tree as a Part of one Story, as well as
what they write of the *Woman with her Issue of*
Blood; and of *Jesus's* casting the Devils out of
the Madman—which are but several Relations
of the same Story, Parable, or Miracle.

N. I don't understand you.

M. I mean what *John of Jerusalem* says ex- Disc. 3. p.
16.
pressly enough, that the three *Evangelists* write
of one and the same Fig-Tree; and consequent-
ly *parabolically*; and that what *St. Matthew*
and *St. Mark* write of it, was no more a *literal*
Transaction than the Parable in *St. Luke*.

N. That is a strange Consequence indeed.
Because *St. Luke's* Parable is about a Fig-
Tree; therefore what *St. Matthew* and *St. Mark*
relate of a Fig-Tree's being blasted by *Jesus*,
is not a real Fact, but a Parable. Do you ex-
pect that I'll seriously undertake to prove that
there is a manifest difference betwixt a Para-
ble, or Fable, and a plain Matter-of-Fact?

M. No: but if the *Evangelists* speak of one
and the same Fig-Tree, both in the Parable,
and the supposed Miracle; I think it will fol-
low that the Miracle was only a *parabolical*
Narrative; and not really transacted.

N. When you suppose the *Evangelists* to
speak of one and the same Fig-Tree, you must
mean that the *real* Tree that was blasted, and
the *imaginary* One in the Parable, served as
Types or Symbols of the same Thing, to wit,
the *Jewish Nation*: but still the one was an
imaginary Tree; and the other a *real* One.

M. The *Parable*, and the *Miracle* were not
only upon a Fig-Tree; but in *both* it was e-

SECT. III.  qually typical, and prophetick, as you say ; they pointed to the very same Event : and being consider'd in the obvious and literal Sence, they must appear equally absurd. Whence we must conclude, that they are both parabolical Prophecys ; and that there is no more Reason to think the Miracle a real Fact, than the Parable ; the one being related as much like a Fact as the other.

N. If you compare them carefully, you will see a manifest difference. The Miracle is related as all Facts are in other Historys, with such particular Circumstances as plainly show it to be a real Transaction. But the Parable, according to the usual Stile, is spoken of, *A certain Man*—without any particularity of Circumstances : and the *Evangelist* expressly calls it a *Parable*. They both relate to the same Event indeed : but the difference of time, as well as the Stile, and other Circumstances sufficiently show the one to be a Parable ; and the other a plain Fact. *Jesus* spake the Parable about a Year before he blasted the Fig-Tree. The Parable was a prophetick Warning given to the *Jews*, that if they continued as obstinately wicked and unfruitful during the last Year of his Ministry and Labours among them, as they had done under the *three* former, they wou'd *then* be given up to final Impenitence, and certain Destruction. And when that last Year was almost expired, *Jesus* farther explain'd his parabolical Prophecy concerning the Ruin of the *Jews*, and miraculously confirm'd the Truth and Certainty of it, by blasting the Fig-Tree : which showed that their Destruction, threaten'd in the Parable, was now *irrevocably* determin'd ; and wou'd in due time be punctually accomplish't.

M. It

M. It can be no Argument for a literal SECT. III.
Disc. 3. p.
16. Transaction of this Miracle that the *Evangelists* speak of it as a thing done: for as *Origen* says, "There are some Things spoken of in the Gospels as Facts, which yet were never transacted:" and indeed it is of the Nature of Prophecy to speak of Things to come, as if they were already past.

N. If the Assertion Mr. *W.* quotes as from *Origen*, was really his, (which you must give me leave to question), he must have meant it of *Christ's Parables*, or of *figurative Expressions*: and then it is nothing to the present purpose. But if he apply'd it to other Things, he was grossly mistaken. Tho' in the antient Prophecys the *præterit Tense* is sometimes used instead of the *Future*; you will not pretend that the same Latitude is taken in the Gospels; not even in *Christ's Predictions*: and far less can it be supposed to be used by the *Evangelists* in their Historical Narrations. Mr. *W.* might as well make a Parable of the Resurrection of *Lazarus*, as of *Christ's* blasting the Fig-Tree: seeing *St. Luke* relates a Parable of one *Lazarus* who died, and was buried: and was carry'd into *Abraham's Bosom*. He might have insisted, that *St. John* and *St. Luke* write of one and the same Parable: I wonder it never came into his Head to allegorize the whole Story of *Lazarus*. Or if he cou'd safely allow of his having dyed in the *literal Sense*; he might have asserted that his *Resurrection* was figurative and *mystical*: and that *Jesus* only quicken'd and rais'd up *Lazarus* from his *Trespasses and Sins* to an exalted State of Glory in *Abraham's Bosom*; and made them sit together in *Heavenly Places*. This Notion well pursued

Eph. ii. 5, 6.

SECT. III.  wou'd have saved him a great deal of Trouble: and wou'd have look't full as plausible as his Reasoning about *Jesus's* blasting the Fig-Tree. But I think we may now leave this Subject. We have already bestow'd more time upon it than it required.

Disc. 3. p.
17

M. I have one Thing more to urge; which I think is an absolute Demonstration that there is no Truth in the Letter of this Story: and, that is, what *Jesus* adds upon the Disciples' wondering at the sudden withering of the Fig-Tree; saying, that "if they had Faith, they shou'd not only do what was done to the Fig-Tree; but shou'd say to *any* Mountain be thou removed and cast into the Sea; and it shou'd be done." But these Things were never literally done by them. Consequently, *Jesus* himself did not *literally* curse the Fig-Tree; or the Disciples wanted Faith for doing the said Miracles; which is an Absurdity to suppose: or *Jesus* talk't idly of a Promise to invest them with a Power they were never to be possess't of.

N. What your Friend calls an *absolute Demonstration* dwindles into a Difficulty that is easily solved. The Promise or Declaration that *Jesus* made to his Disciples, that they shou'd be inabled to do what he did to the Fig-Tree, cou'd only mean that they shou'd be able miraculously to destroy Things or Persons, as occasion might require. And whether this miraculous Power was exerted by them upon Trees, or other Things, still the Promise was made good: because it cou'd not relate to the *subject* on which their Power was to be employed; but to the *act* itself of blasting, or destroying. Now we find that the Apostles had the

the Power of destroying the Life, or the Senses SECT. III.
of wicked Persons. For *Peter* struck *Ananias* and *Sapphira* dead upon the spot: and *Paul* smote *Elymas* the Sorcerer with Blindness: which were more astonishing Instances of Divine Power than the blasting a Tree, or destroying only a vegetative Life. As to the other part of the Promise made to the Apostles, that if they had *Faith* enough, they shou'd be able to remove Mountains; this can only be extended to their having a *sufficient Power* to do this; and not to the *actual Exercise* of that Power; which were always to be determined according to the Circumstances and Exigence of Things. So that supposing none of the Apostles ever did actually remove any Mountain in the literal Sense; they might still have a Power to do it, in case any important Occasion shou'd have required such a kind of Miracle. We don't find that *Jesus* himself ever removed any Mountain; and yet I think it cannot be doubted but that he was able to have done it; seeing he did Things no less wonderful. All Persons have a *natural Power* of doing many Things that they never do, both in common Life, and as to their moral Conduct. And this is equally true of such Powers as are *supernatural*. So that the Apostles might have had the Power of removing a Mountain into the Sea, tho' for want of a proper Occasion they never did it. Their working other Miracles no less surprizing, showed that they were actually possess't of that Divine Power from on Luk. xxiv. 49.
High, with which *Jesus* promised to endue them. However, I see no manner of Absurdity in supposing that they had not always that height of miraculous Faith which was necessary in order

SECT. III.  der to their doing such singular Miracles, as the removing of Mountains.

M. I don't know what you mean by a *miraculous* Faith.

N. I mean that Kind and Degree of Faith which our Saviour declared to be necessary in order to their working the greatest Miracles ; to wit, an actual Belief and firm Perswasion Mar. xi. 23. (free from all manner of doubting) that the wonderful Things they design'd to do, shou'd certainly come to pass. Now it is not probable that the Nature and Kind of the Miracles which the Apostles wrought, were left intirely to their-own Choice and Determination. It seems more reasonable to suppose, that the same omniscient Power which enabled them to work Miracles, directed them as to the Kind, the Time, the Subject, Witnesses, and other Circumstances of them : and that some divine Impulse upon their Minds might be necessary to excite that degree of Faith which was required to their working Miracles. Such a *Supposition* as this cannot be of the least *ill Consequence to Religion*. Our Saviour assured his Apostles, that they shou'd be inabled to do such wonderful Things as he himself did : and with this miraculous Power they were so amply invested, that the most amazing Wonders were often wrought by them. Disc. 3. p. 17.

T. Gentlemen, I think ye have both said as much upon the blasting of the Fig-Tree, as the Subject will bear. Let us now hear, Mr. M, what you have to object against the miraculous Cure of the *lame Man* at the Pool of *Bethesda*. Joh. v. 5.

M. As to *Jesus's* Miracle in this Story, which consisted in his healing a Man of nobody

body knows what *Infirmity*, there neither is nor can be proved any thing supernatural in it: or there had been an exprefs Description of the Disease; (that we might be sure it was not curable by Art;) without which it is impossible to say there was a miraculous Cure wrought.

SECT. III.



N. I answer'd this very Objection fully before. * A particular Description of the Man's Cure was needless. He was Lame thirty-eight Years; having an *Infirmity*, or *Illness* that confin'd him to his Bed; and yet *Jesus* cured him in a Moment; without the use of any means. This evidently shows the Cure to be miraculous, whatever the Nature of his Disease was; and whether it was curable by Art, or not. And since he must have been far advanc'd in Years; this helps still farther to heighten the wonder.

* Sect. II.
P. 66.

M. You seem to lay a Stress upon his having been ill thirty-eight Years: but many Instances may be given of Infirmitys of human Nature of a long Duration, which in time, and especially in old-age wear off. And who knows but this was the Case of the impotent Man; whose *Infirmity* *Jesus* observing to be wearing off, bid him be gone, and take up his Couch, for he wou'd soon be made whole.

Disc. 3. P.
53.

N. It is not easy to imagin what sort of Infirmitys you mean. No-one can think that any bodily *Infirmity* of thirty-eight Years continuance will wear off with Age: and far less that any sort of Lameness shou'd do so. But if length of time cou'd lessen, or remove some lasting Illnesses, thro' a lucky Concurrence of natural Causes, or a right Application of proper means; this can never Account for an aged Person's being

SECT. III. being cured of an inveterate Lameness in a Moment, without the use of any means at all. On this occasion *Jesus* did not bid him be gone, for that he *wou'd soon* be made whole: but said to him, *Rise, take up thy Bed, and walk.* This *wou'd* have been a ridiculous and impracticable Order, if, upon pronouncing these Words, the Man had not been *immediately made whole.* For, if his Illness had still continued, he cou'd scarce *rise* up: far less cou'd he be strong enough to *take up* his *Bed*, and *walk* off with it. But *St. John* tells us the Man was healed *immediately*: and as a *Proof* of his Cure, he took up his *Bed*, and *carry'd* it away.

Joh. v. 9.

Disc. 3. p.
34

M. As far as one may reasonably guess, this Man's Infirmary was more Lazyness, than Lameness: and *Jesus* only shamed him out of his pretended Illness by bidding him take up his *Stool*, and walk off; and not *ly* any longer like a lazy lubbard and dissembler among the diseased, who were real Objects of Pity and Compassion. Or, if he was no dissembler, he was only fancifully sick: and *Jesus* by some proper and seasonable Talk touch't his Heart, to his Relief: and so by the help of his-own Imagination he was cured, and went away.

N. After all *Mr. W.*'s big talking of the Absurditys and Incredibilitys in this Story, you see he gives us his *Guesses* about the Nature of the poor Man's Illness: and seems to expect that we shou'd rather rely upon his groundless Conjectures, than upon the plain Testimony of the *Evangelist*, who knew the Truth of what he relates. He tells us the Man was *im-potent* or lame. *Mr. W.* guesses he was only lazy. *St. John* says he had labour'd thirty-eight

eight Years under his Illness; and was in a helpless destitute Condition. Mr. *W.* fancies he was either but a dissembler; or only hip-pish, or fancifully sick. St. *John* says that *Jesus* bade the Man take up his *Bed* and walk: but Mr. *W.* tells us that *Jesus* bid him take up his *Stool*, and walk off: (for he will rather believe the Man *lay* always upon a *Stool*, than seem to agree with the *Evangelist* in one Circumstance of the Story.) St. *John* assures us that *Jesus* made the Man whole *immediately*, by speaking a few Words to him. Mr. *W.* imagines that he only shamed him out of his pretended Illness; or at most relieved him a little by *seasonable* Talk. This is telling us plainly that he looks upon the *Evangelist's* Account of this Miracle to be a mere Fiction.

M. To say the Truth, I think the best conception that an impartial Reader of the Gospel can form of *Jesus*, is, that he was a tolerable good natural Orator, and cou'd handsomely harangue the People off-hand: and his Admirers finding him indued with the Gift of Utterance, which was thought by them more than human, they fancy'd he must have the Gift of Healing too; and wou'd have him to exercise it: which he did with Success upon the Fancys and Imagination of many; who magnify'd his divine Power for it. And the Apostles afterwards to help forward the Credulity and Delusion of the People, amplify'd his Fame with extravagant Assertions and strange Storys of Miracles passing the Belief of considerate and wise Men.

N. I know not what Answer you can expect to such a flourish as this; which has not one Word

SECT. II. Word of Truth in it; nor so much as the least shew of Probability. *Jesus* was so far from affecting to be thought an *Orator*, that he always spoke in such a plain artless manner, as was fittest for the meanest Capacitys. And tho' there was always something truly sublime and lofty in the Truths he taught, and even a beautiful Simplicity in his Language; yet he seems to have industriously avoided all the usual Ornaments of Speech. He was so far from relieving sick People by *seasonable Talk*, or *haranguing* them *handsomely*, that he seldom said any more to them than he did to the lame Man, *Rise, take up thy Bed and walk*: thy Faith hath made the whole; or the like. No one but you and Mr. *W.* can imagin that there is the least Connection betwixt *haranguing* People *handsomely*, and *healing* their Diseases. It is impossible to cure a Palsy, Leprosy, or Lameness by mere talk; or to restore Men's Life, or Limbs, their Sight, or Speech, by haranguing and suitable *Admonitions*. How far the Apostles were from amplifying the Fame of *Jesus*, otherwise than by candidly relating some few of his Actions, I shall have occasion to show you more fully afterwards: In the mean time, I wish you wou'd have done with *your* haranguing; and give us some of your Objections. For, you have yet advanced nothing that has the Appearance of a difficulty.

Disc. 3. p.
55.

M. Since *Jesus* cured only this one Man, it affords Matter of Speculation whether he was the most, or the least, diseased among them. Infidels will say that he was only hippish or fancifully ill: and that *Jesus* working upon his Imagination by suitable Exhortations, and
Admoni-

Admonitions, perswaded him into a Belief of SECT. III.
his Cure, and bid him walk-off. 

N. I'm forced sometimes to repeat the same Answer, when the same Objection is repeated. *Jesus* gave the Man *no Admonitions*, nor *suitable Exhortations*. Instead of being *suitable*, it wou'd have been *ridiculous* to *admonish* and *exhort* a lame Man to be sound and strong. There was no possible way to *perswade him into a Belief of his Cure*, but by giving him the free use of his Limbs, and making him whole. And this *Jesus* did in a Moment; tho' the Man had been infirm thirty-eight Years.

M. Our Translation makes the thirty-eight Disc. 3. p. 47. Years to relate only to the Continuance of his Illness: but it is equally applicable to his Stay at the Pool. And tho' we cannot certainly say from this Man's Infirmary, that he was a Fool to ly there so long expecting that Cure which it was impossible for him to obtain: yet what he said to our Saviour, "I have no Man when the Waters are troubled, to put me into the Pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me"; implies his Folly sufficiently; or rather the Incredibility of the whole Story. What had he to do at this Pool, if he had neither Legs of his-own good enough, nor a Friend to assist him in the Attainment of Sanctification? Was he not a Fool for his Patience? Divines may commend him for it: but after a few Years or rather a few Days Experience, another Man wou'd have been convinc'd of the Folly and Vanity of his Hopes; and have returned home.

N. It seems indeed improbable that the Man shou'd ly thirty-eight Years at the Pool, (if he

SECT. III. he had any Home, or Friends to go to,) when he found there was little or no hope of a Cure. But if this Supposition be so incredible as Mr. *W.* represents it, is not that a sufficient Argument against his Construction of the *Evangelist's* Words. Supposing the meaning of them were doubtful, as (all Things being duely consider'd) they are not: yet when an ambiguous Expression is capable of two different Sences, one of which is absurd, or highly improbable; and the other rational, and consistent with the Context; every candid and judicious Person will certainly prefer the most rational Interpretation before the other. But the improbable Sense of the Passage wou'd best fit Mr. *W.*'s purpose; and therefore he insists upon that: and from his own absurd Construction of St. *John's* Words, he draws an Argument to prove that the thing he relates is incredible. It is altogether uncertain how long the Man had lain at the Pool. St. *John* intimates that *he had already continued a long time* there: for so, I think, *πολὸν ἤδη χρόνον ἔχει*, shou'd be render'd: and if any thing must be added to compleat the Sense, the Word [*there*] expresses the *Evangelist's* true meaning better than [*in that Case.*] But unless we knew exactly the Man's Circumstances; and what St. *John* precisely meant by a *long time*; we cannot judge whether the Man's Patience was prudent or foolish. However, you may think of this Circumstance as you will: it cannot in the least affect the Truth of the Fact.

Ch. v. 6.

Disc. 3. P.
48.

M. If he cou'd not put in for the Benefit of a Cure with Prospect of Success, in his more youthful Days, when the Distemper was young too; much less Reason had he to hope
for

for it in his *Old-age* after thirty-eight Years Affliction; unless he dream't of (what was not to be imagin'd) an opportunity without Molestation and Competition to go-off with it. I will not believe there ever was such a Fool: and for that Reason will not suppose St. *John* cou'd literally so Romance; unless he meant to bambouze Mankind into the Belief of the greatest Absurdity.

N. I observed before, that the more incredible the Man's lying thirty-eight Years at the Pool may seem to be, the greater Reason there is for interpreting St. *John*'s Words in the other Sence; viz. that the thirty-eight Years related only to the Continuance of the Man's Infirmary; and not to his stay at the Pool. But however long you may suppose him to have waited for a Cure, you will find little Reason to blame his Patience; if you consider, (1.) That seeing Cures were frequently wrought at the Pool, he might hope for an opportunity of being cured *at last* without any Competition. And probably his perceiving the Number of the Diseased to lessen at different times, (tho' it afterwards increas'd again) might inliven his Hopes, and encourage him, tho' often disappointed, to persevere still in his patient Expectation of Relief. (2.) Seeing he was poor and friendless, he might pass his time as well, in the Porches at the Pool of *Bethesda*, the *House of Mercy*, as any-where else: and be there supply'd with the Necessaries of Life. (3.) Having been so many Years lame, and perhaps destitute of Relations, or any-one to assist him, he might have no other place to go to; and be forced to continue where he was. (4.) If he had any *distant* Home to go to (which does

SECT. III.
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SECT. III: does not seem probable,) he might have no possible way of being convey'd thither. And seeing he cou'd have no hopes of being cured any other way than by bathing in the Pool, we cannot wonder that he lay patiently at a place he cou'd not remove from.

T. If he had no Friend to help him, or Home to go to; one wou'd wonder how he subsisted at the Pool.

N. The five *Porches* at *Bethesda* were probably a kind of Hospital, where the Necessities of infirm and helpless poor People were reliev'd. Or he might have lived upon the Charity and Alms of his diseased Neighbours who lay at the Pool. We cannot suppose that they were all poor and destitute; or that they wou'd be so inhuman as to let the poor Man perish.

Disc. 3. p.
38.

M. St. *John's* Account of the Pool of *Bethesda*, and the wonderful Cures wrought by bathing in it, has no good Foundation in History, and merits no Man's Credit. *Josephus* says nothing of it; tho' he professedly wrote the History of the *Jewish* Nation; and seems to omit nothing that makes for the Honour of his Country. And can you think St. *John's* single Authority sufficient to convey this Story down to us?

Ibid. 7

N. Why not? You know "there are several Prodigys as well as political Events of antient Times, that, tho' they are reported but by one Historian, meet with Credit." And I hope that St. *John's* Testimony will be allow'd to be equal to another Writer's. All that can be inferr'd from the Silence of *Josephus*, is either that he had not heard of the Cures at *Bethesda*; or forgot to mention them: or that he did not think they were miraculous:
and

and if they were wrought by natural Causes (as seems probable) we cannot wonder at his taking no Notice of them. He has omitted several Things of far greater Moment. SECT. III.

M. Tho' it is hardly probable but that this Story if true must have had the fortune to be told by others ; yet St. *John's* Testimony shall pass sooner than another Man's, if the Matter be in itself credible and well circumstanced. But the Story before us is related blindly, imperfectly, and with Circumstances monstrously incredible. To convince you of this, I need only ask what was the true Occasion of an Angel's Descent into this Pool ? Was it to wash and bathe himself ? Whether did he descend with his Head or his Feet foremost ?—How often did he vouchsafe his descent into the Pool ?— Disc. 3^d p. 49.

N. All your Questions and Difficulties are founded upon a vulgar Mistake in supposing that an *Angel* came down to the Pool to trouble the Waters. **Ἀγγελος* generally signifies a *Messenger*. But in Scripture when it denotes a Messenger (or heavenly Spirit) coming immediately from God, it is render'd an *Angel*. Now in the Passage of St. *John*, this ambiguous Term being commonly supposed to signify an *Angel*, (or a *Messenger* sent from Heaven ;) some wonderful Virtue was thought to be communicated to the Water, upon his coming down to trouble or move it. If instead of, an *Angel*, our Translators had render'd, *ἄγγελος* a *Messenger*, as they * might have done ; this wou'd

* *Ἀγγελος* is by our Translators render'd *Messenger* in several places ; particularly in the following *historical Narratives* ; *Luk.* vii. 24. *Ch.* ix. 52. *2 Cor.* xii. 7.

SECT. III. wou'd have suggested a more easy and rational way of accounting for the medicinal Virtue of the Pool at *Bethesda*, than by bringing an *Angel* on purpose from Heaven to move the Water.

M. What *Messenger* do you imagin *St. John* meant? Who was he? Whence came he? And what was his Business?

N. To give a satisfactory Answer to your Questions, I must put you in mind that the Pool here called *Bethesda* was not far from the Temple of *Jerusalem*; where there must have been a proper Receptacle and Conveyance for the Blood of the Sacrifices, and the Water they were wash't in: and that betwixt the Temple and the Pool, there was probably a Channel of Communication by which the bloody Water from the Temple was convey'd into the upper end of the Pool. And it is likely that close by the Pool there was a Sluce or Flood-gate fixt at the Mouth of the Channel; that when a sufficient Number of Sacrifices were offer'd, and the Receptacle at the Temple was full, the bloody Water might by the Channel be let down at once into the Pool. On such occasions a *Messenger*, who came down from the Temple, probably acquainted the diseased in the Porches at *Bethesda*, before he drew up the Sluce, and let down the bloody Water: which, flowing in with force, was the more effectually agitated and mixt with the Water of the Pool; and had the greater Efficacy in curing some particular Distempers. It is uncertain whether

Jam. ii. 25. And I think it ought to have been render'd *Messenger* too, and not *Angel*, in *Acts* xii. 15. *Gal.* iv. 14. and *1 Cor.* xi. 10. compared with *2 Cor.* viii. 23. and *1 Cor.* xi. 16.

whether the healing Virtue of this mixt Water was owing chiefly to the Blood of the Sacrifices, or to some medicinal Quality in the Water of the Pool; or to both when duely agitated. But there can be no Reason to have recourse to any divine or miraculous Power in the Case; and far less to suppose that an *Angel* came down from Heaven to trouble the Water: seeing a *Messenger* sent down to the Pool (who was probably an Under-officer of the Temple) cou'd easily agitate the Water, by opening the Sluce, and letting down the bloody Water from the Temple into it; and perhaps by going down himself afterwards into the Pool, to trouble and mix the Waters more forcibly.

M. Had the Angel's coming down from Heaven to the Pool to give a healing Virtue to the Waters, been a *Christian* Miracle, it wou'd have past current. But since it is too great a favour to be allow'd to the wicked *Jews*; you turn the heavenly *Angel* into a common *Messenger*; and account for the Cures at *Bethesda* in a natural way. I cannot but observe here, that tho' you will not allow Mr. W. and me to make one single *Supposition*, when we endeavour to explain some of *Jesus's* Miracles; but insist rigidly upon Proof and positive Evidence of what we say: yet in this Case, with the help of *perhaps*, and *probably*, you have form'd a Scheme that you cannot pretend has any Foundation either in Scripture, or History.

N. The chief Things in this Scheme (as you call it) are undoubted Facts attested by St. *John*: and the other particulars are founded upon these (or other well-known) Facts; and

SECT. III. naturally arise from them. St. *John* tells us that the Pool of *Bethesda* was at (iv, in) *Jerusalem*; and therefore it cou'd not be far from the Temple. (By * some it was suppos'd to be so near, that the Sacrifices after they were killed were wash't in the Pool; and then deliver'd to the Priests.) He says that the Water of this Pool had a healing Virtue only when it was troubled, or moved: that, in order to this, a *Messenger* came down to move the Waters: and then whosoever of the diseased stept first into the Water, was cured of his Illness. So far we have St. *John's* Testimony. Now since there were vast Numbers of Sacrifices offer'd in the Temple at all the great *Feasts* of the *Jews*; there must have been some large Receptacle for the Blood of these Sacrifices; and for Water enough to wash them in: and likewise some Conveyance or other to carry off this bloody Water, as often as there was occasion. The chief thing that I suppose, and cannot directly prove, is, that there was a Channel of Communication betwixt the *Temple* and the *Pool*, by which the bloody Water was at proper times let down from the Temple into it; and a Sluce to stop it from flowing in constantly, in small Quantities, and with little force. And even this cannot be reckon'd a precarious or improbable Supposition. For, since the Pool was not far from the Temple, and that there must have been a proper Receptacle for the bloody Water of the Sacrifices, and some way of conveying it from the Temple; we cannot think of a more likely Conveyance, than by such a Channel as I suppose there

* See Dr. *Hammond's* Notes on *Joh. v. 2.*

there was betwixt the Receptacle at the Temple, and the Pool. Now admitting this one particular, every thing else will follow of course. The *Messenger* who came down from the Temple must agitate and trouble the Water, by drawing up the Sluce, and letting the bloody Water flow in with force into the Pool. And from the Mixture of these Waters in the Heat of the Day, a healing Virtue wou'd naturally arise.

M. If this happen'd but once in a Year (as *Chrysoſtom* thought) it is not likely that a great Number of diseased People wou'd have waited in the Porches of the Pool : especially when they were sure that one of them only cou'd be cured at a time. Dist. 3. p. 42.

N. I'm of your mind. And therefore since St. *John* assures us, that Numbers of the diseased usually lay at the Pool ; we must conclude that *Chrysoſtom* was much out in his Conjecture. It is more likely that the time of the *Messenger's* coming down was very uncertain : and that the bloody Water was let into the Pool not only every Day of each great Feast, which included a whole Week ; but as often as there was a Quantity of bloody Water sufficient to give a healing Virtue to the Pool ; which might be found out by Experience, and repeated Trials. St. *John* tells us the Messenger came down, *κατὰ καιρὸν* ; which may be render'd, * *from time to time*, that is, as often as there was occasion. And seeing there were dayly Sacrifices offer'd in the Temple ; we may reasonably suppose that the Receptacle there might be often empty'd : and that

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* Thus in *Acts* ii. 46. *κατ' οἶκον*, is rightly render'd, *from House to House*.

SECT. III. therefore *many* diseased Persons were cured at the Pool every Year ; or at least had an opportunity of finding that their Diseases were incurable.

M. But why was there only one diseased Person cured at a time ? This is a very unaccountable Circumstance ; and enough to make us suspect the Truth of the whole Story.

N. The upper Part of the Pool, into which the diseased went down, might be so narrow, that it cou'd not conveniently hold more than two or three at a time ; namely, the diseased Person, and his Assistant, and perhaps the *Messenger* from the Temple ; who after letting-out the bloody Water into the Pool, might farther agitate the mixt Waters, while the diseased Person bath'd in them.

M. It seems very improbable that any part of a Pool shou'd be so narrow as to hold but two or three Persons.

N. It might be artificially contrived so when the Porches over it were built, that the bloody Water being mixt at first with a small Quantity of Water in the bathing part of the Pool, the healing Virtue of the Water and Blood, forcibly mixt, might be the greater ; and the opportunities of healing the diseased be the more frequent. If the upper or bathing part of the Pool adjoyning to the Channel from the Temple had not been made narrow, the bloody Water wou'd have been too soon diffused over the Pool ; and have lost its medicinal Virtue, by being mixt with too great a quantity of other Water : but being confin'd within a proper Compass fit for bathing in, it must flow down the Pool gently by some narrow out-let ; and no faster than it came from the Channel.

This

This is at least a consistent and probable Account of the Cures wrought by the Waters of *Bethesda*. There is another Account of it in Dr. *Hammond's* Notes on the place; who *cautiously* rejects the vulgar Notion of an *Angel's* coming down from Heaven to trouble the Waters: and imputes their healing Virtue chiefly to the Sacrifices being wash't in the Pool, after they were killed. But whether this, or the conveying of the Blood, *viz.* of the Sacrifices, as well as the Water they were wash't in, by a Channel from the Temple to the Pool, be more probable; and likelyest to give a medicinal Quality to the Pool, I leave others to determin. Either view of the Case will sufficiently account for the healing Virtue of the Waters of *Bethesda* in some particular Distempers, without any Miracle. And as the Doctor rightly observes here, the Christian Religion is no-way concerned in the *Miraculousness* of any Cure wrought at that Pool; seeing this Benefit was afforded the *Jews* before *Christ's* coming; and was continued to them at the time of their resisting and crucifying of *Jesus*.

M. Ay, there is the Case. The descent of an Angel into the Pool being supposed to be a *Jewish* Miracle; that Orthodox Divine made no Scruple of explaining it away. But had he taken the same freedom with any Miracle of *Jesus*, he wou'd have been suspected of Infidelity, and charg'd with Profaneness. And if you were to publish the Account you have now given us of the Cures wrought at *Bethesda*, you wou'd pass among some of your Brethren for a very *Free-Thinker*.

SECT. III.

N. I endeavour always to lay aside Prejudice and Prepossession ; that I may think and judge as freely, and impartially of every thing as I can. And I lay it down as a Maxim, that those Facts only are to be reckon'd *miraculous*, which cannot be rationally and consistently accounted for in a natural way. Now since you and I agree, that the common Cures at the Pool of *Bethesda* might very well be wrought without the help of an *Angel* ; I think we may dismiss this Point, and proceed to some other.

Dis. 23. P.
43.

M. The chief Objections are still to come. For instance ; supposing there was no Angel concern'd in the Cures wrought at the Pool ; how came it to pass that there was not better care taken by the Civil Magistrates of *Jerusalem* about the disposal of the Favour or Privilege of being cured, to this or that poor Man, according to their Necessitys, or Deserts, or the time of their coming to the Pool, as Equity seem'd to require. To suppose they wou'd leave such a Favour to the struggle of a Multitude is absurd and incredible.

N. If the Magistrates appointed any Officer to inspect this Affair, he might prefer and assist those that cou'd best reward him. And for that Reason the *poor* lame Man whom our Saviour cured, wou'd still have been neglected. But what if they mistook or neglected their Duty in this Case ; and did not take care to preserve good Order at the Pool ? What if they, or those they entrusted, were not quite so righteous and vigilant as they ought to have been ? Is this a Supposition so absurd and incredible as to invalidate St. *John's* Testimony ? The Character of the Rulers and People
of

of *Jerusalem* drawn by a *Jew*, (who knew them perfectly well, and cannot be supposed to misrepresent them,) is this. “How is the faithful City [*Jerusalem*] become an Harlot!—
 “Thy Princes, [or, Rulers,] are Rebellious
 “and Companions of Thieves. Every-one
 “loveth Gifts; and followeth after Rewards.
 “They judge not the Fatherless; neither doth
 “the Cause of the Widow come unto them.”
 Thus it was in *Isaiab*'s time: and we * find they were not better in our *Saviour*'s Days. Is it *incredible* then to think that there was the least *Neglect*, *Corruption*, or *Mismanagement* among *Jewish* Magistrates; or indeed among any Rulers whatever? I'm surpriz'd that Mr. *W.* shou'd have mention'd this among his *Objections*.

SECT. III.

 Isa. i.

M. What think you then of the sorts of *impotent* Folk that lay at the Pool to be cured; the *Blind*, the *Halt*, and the *Witber'd*? What did any of *these* there? Cou'd any of them be suppos'd nimble enough of Foot to step down first into the Waters, and carry off the Prize of Sanation, before many others of various Distempers?

Disc. 3. p. 45.

N. Experience probably had shown that the Waters were beneficial chiefly to such kind of diseased Persons; and perhaps to them only. The *Evangelist* says indeed, that *whosoever* stepped in first after the troubling of the Water, was made whole of *whatsoever Disease* he had. But it seems reasonable to restrain that general Expression, to whichsoever of the *impotent* Persons that were spoken of before: so that the first of *them* who went into the Pool was cured
 of

* See Jos. de Bell. Jud. l. 7. c. 8.

SECT. III. of his Illness ; whether he was *Blind*, *Halt*, or *Witber'd*. Indeed such Persons were more likely than other diseased to reap Benefit by bathing in such bloody Water as was let down from the Temple into the Pool. For, surprising Cures of this kind have been wrought by putting a lame Arm or Leg into the Belly of a Beast as soon as it is open'd ; or by applying the warm Intrails, or the Skin of a Sheep newly flea'd, to the Limb affected. And seeing the Blood of the Sacrifices and the Water their Intrails were wash't in, might be quickly convey'd almost warm (sometimes) into the Pool, in the Heat of the Day ; the mixt Waters of it might in a great Degree have the like healing Quality ; and be particularly fit for curing any sort of Lameness, or disorders of the Muscles or Nerves, rather than other Diseases.

Disc. 3. p.
46.

M. Whatever the [Virtue] of the Waters might be none of the Persons *St. John* mentions cou'd expect the Benefit of them, for *want of good Feet and Eyes* : and therefore they might as well have staid at home, as have resorted to *Bethesda* for a Cure. He must therefore have forgot himself ; or blunder'd egregiously. There might be many of other Distempers ; but there cou'd be neither *blind*, *halt*, nor *witber'd*, without such an Absurdity as absolutely disparages the Story ; and blasts the Credit of the Relator. I know not what Fools the diseased of *Jerusalem* might be of old ; but if there was such a Prize of Health to be strove for by the distemper'd of *London*, I appeal to all Men of common-sense, whether the *blind*, the *lame*, and the *witber'd* wou'd offer to put in for it.

N. They

N. They did not come to the Pool to *strive* who shou'd be *first* healed; but to be cured as soon as they conveniently cou'd. Tho' one only cou'd go into the Pool at a time; yet each might have his Turn: and all of them hope to be cured at last. Even the *want of good Eyes and Feet* cou'd not be such a hinderance as you seem to imagin. For, the same *Eyes and Feet* that brought them to the Pool, might serve to help them *into* it. No doubt they had the Assistance of their Friends when occasion required it. And it was for want of this only, that the poor lame Man was so long neglected. If the *Blind and Lame* had had *good Feet and Eyes*, they cou'd not have come to *Bethesda* for a Cure. It is strange that the very *want of* what they came for to the Pool, shou'd be thought a Reason why they ought to *have stayed at home!* And it is hard that while Mr. W. falls into the grossest Absurdity; he shou'd charge his own senseless *Blinders* upon the *Evangelist*.

M. I have still one Objection more against this Story, and it is so very strong, that it absolutely destroys the fame of *Jesus* for a worker of Miracles. In the *five Porches* by the Pool of *Bethesda*, there lay a great Multitude of impotent Folk, *blind, balt, and withered*: why then did not *Jesus* heal them? Here was a rare opportunity for displaying his healing and Almighty Power: and why did he not exercise it to the relief of that *Multitude of impotent Folk*? If he cou'd not cure them; there is an end of his Power of Miracles. And if he wou'd not; it was want of Mercy and Compassion in him. Which way soever we take this Case, it turns to the dishonour of the Holy *Jesus*.

Disc. 3. p. 49.

N. This

SECT. III.

N. This Objection admits of several Answers: and each of them I think is satisfactory. And (1.) Tho' *Jesus* did not cure the other diseased Persons that lay in the Porches of *Bethesda*, when he heal'd the lame Man; perhaps he did it *afterwards*; on a more proper occasion; when there might be more Witnesses present; and particularly some of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, or Rulers of Synagogues; before some of whom he often chose to perform his miraculous Cures. The silence of the *Evangelists* is no Argument against this Supposition: since *Christ* certainly did * many Miracles, which none of them do *particularly* mention. (2.) In Case *Jesus* healed but one of many that perhaps lay then at the Pool, there might be sufficient Reasons for his singling out him, and not curing the rest. He had probably lain longer there than any of the others. He was helpless and destitute. And his Illness seems to have been incurable. While the rest having Friends to assist them, and Diseases less inveterate, might be cured in a natural way by bathing in the Pool: so that to bestow a miraculous Cure upon them might be unnecessary. (3.) It is likely that the diseased at *Bethesda* did not desire any Relief from *Jesus*. For, it does not appear either from this Passage of St. *John*, or any Part of the Gospels, that he ever rejected any that came to him for Relief. But if he over-look't those who did not apply themselves to him; that can be no Argument either against his Mercy, or his miraculous Power. Of both he gave sufficient Proofs in the numerous Wonders

* See *Matt.* iv. 23, 24. *Ch.* ix. 35. *Mt.* i. 34. *Luk.* iv. 40. *Joh.* vi. 2.

ders he wrought. And if he ever neglected any distress't Persons, we must conclude that he had wise Reasons for it. He might know that the Ends of Providence in afflicting them, were not as yet obtain'd: that their Cure wou'd have prevented their Repentance; and have confirm'd them in their Wickedness: or that their Afflictions tended more to their Improvement in all Virtue and Goodness, than Ease, Health, and Prosperity cou'd do. Either of these, (or perhaps other unknown) Reasons might be sufficient to justify our Saviour's curing one Person only at *Bethesda*, and over-looking the rest. (4.) The chief Design of his Miracles was not to relieve People's present Wants, Pains, and Troubles. This was but a secondary View, and a subordinate End, in the many wonderful Cures, and other Miracles he wrought. The main design of them was to prove his divine Mission, and to attest the Truth of his Doctrine: not so much to relieve People's bodily Diseases, as the Disorders of their Soul: to awaken, instruct, improve, and change their Minds; and to make them not only sound and well; but wise, and good. When these higher Aims cou'd not be attained in some degree, Miracles were improper. Therefore *Jesus* wrought his, only upon important Occasions; as Wisdom directed him: upon such Persons generally, as by the Afflictions they labour'd under, had attain'd to that patient, humble, and submissive Temper, that trust in God, and due regard to Truth, which is meant by the *Faith* that *Jesus usually* required in those whom he miraculously healed, or at least in such as brought them to him. Where this Faith

SECT. III. Faith or upright Disposition of Mind was not found; neither in the diseased Persons themselves, nor in the People among whom they lived; *he cou'd not do many wonderful Works*: that is, it wou'd have been in vain, and imprudent for him to have wrought many Miracles among them. His divine Power was always the same: and he was always equally kind and beneficent to Mankind; and compassionate towards the miserable. But both his *Power* and his *Goodness* were necessarily directed by *Wisdom*; which always restrain'd him from every imprudent Act; and from working any Miracle that wou'd have been either *useless*, *improper*, or *unseasonable*. And such perhaps the miraculous Cures wou'd have been, that he might have wrought on the diseased at *Bethesda*. But, (5.) *Christ's* not curing every infirm Person he might see there, is just such a Proof of his wanting either sufficient Goodness, or a miraculous Power; as the Almighty's not preventing, or not miraculously removing, all kind of Diseases among Mankind, is an Argument against either his Omnipotence, or his Goodness. For the Atheist might as well urge, that if God cannot cure the diseased; there is an end of his Almighty Power: and if he will not, it is want of Mercy and Compassion in him. The same Answer will serve both Objections: and it is so very obvious (as I have fully shown you,) that one wou'd think the most thoughtless Infidel cou'd not over-look it.

M. I will not pretend to reply to your several Answers in the same order that you mention'd them; but must speak of Things as they come into my Mind. Of the good or ill Dispositions

positions of the diseased at *Bethesda* we can say nothing. They were probably as well disposed as the lame Man whom *Jesus* cured, without his having made any Application to him. I grant that he *might* have healed them afterwards: but there is no Reason to suppose that he did; or St *John* wou'd have told us so, for his Master's honour—

N. You will excuse my interrupting you one Moment to put you in mind of what I shou'd have mentioned before; that in the very next Chapter, Saint *John* tells us, that when *Jesus* went over the Sea of *Galilee* (or Lake of *Genesareth*) a great Multitude followed him, because they saw his Miracles which he did on them that were diseased. His Words are ἐπὶ τῶν ἀσθενούντων; the very same term that he used in the foregoing Chapter, concerning those at the Pool of *Bethesda*: so that in both places it might (and shou'd) have been render'd *infirm*, or *impotent* Folk. Now if any of the Miracles that the Multitude saw, were wrought at *Jerusalem*, as seems probable; it is as likely that they shou'd be done upon the *infirm* (or *diseased*) Persons at *Bethesda*, as on any other.

M. This is all Conjecture. As to your other Answer, that when *Jesus* cured the lame Man, he might leave the other diseased to be cured by bathing in the Pool; all I shall say is, that they were little obliged to him for his kindness. It wou'd have shown more Humanity and Compassion to have healed them all at the same time; and not to let them wait, we know not how long, for a Cure.

N. The trial of their Patience for a while might conduce more to their true Welfare and Hap-

SECT. III. Happiness, than an immediate Cure. For, if they were vicious, the continuance of their Affliction might help to reform them. And if they were good; their Patience, Submission to the divine Will, and other Virtues wou'd be the more improved and confirm'd. Besides, since they had all a fair Prospect of being cured by bathing in the Pool, and perhaps very soon too; this was a sufficient Reason for our Saviour's declining to work Miracles merely to *hasten* those Cures which they might be sure of obtaining in a natural way.

Disc. 3. p. 50. M. The *Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke* tell such Storys of *Jesus's* healing Power, as wou'd incline us to think he cured all wherever he came. They say he *healed all manner of Diseases among the People*: and they mention particular Times and Places where *all the diseased* were healed by him. Which Assertions imply that his healing Power was most extensive. But this Story in *St. John* confutes and confounds all. He no-where talks of *Jesus's* healing of *many*; nor of *all manner of Diseases*; much less of all that were diseased: which if it be not like a Contradiction to the other *Evangelists*, is some Diminution of their Authority; and enough to make us suspect that they stretch't much in Praise of their Master; and said more to his Honour than was strictly true.

N. Tho' *St. John* does not say in *express Terms* that *Jesus* healed *many*; yet he declares this in equivalent Expressions. For we not only find in his Gospel, that *Jesus* did *many Miracles*; and *many good Works*; by which *miraculous Cures* are evidently meant: but he tells us that a great Multitude followed *Jesus*,
because

Ch. xi. 47.
Ch. xii. 37.
Ch. x. 32.
Ch. vi. 2.

because they saw his *Miracles which he did on them that were diseased*. Now since in St. John's Gospel, the doing many good Works manifestly signifies the doing many Miracles upon the diseased; that is, the healing of many; (for these are all equivalent Expressions;) to affirm that St. John in no place of his Gospel talks of Jesus's healing of many, is a direct Contradiction to the Evangelist; and saying, in other Words, that he no-where talks of Christ's doing many good Works; or wonderful Cures, or Miracles upon the diseased. His not taking particular Notice of many miraculous Cures recorded by the other Evangelists, can be no Diminution of their Authority; because, from the whole Tenor of his Gospel, it manifestly appears that his main view in composing it was to supply some of their Omissions; and to relate such Things chiefly as they had not mentioned. Silence when one is obliged, or expected, to speak in defence of the Truth, is generally supposed to imply consent. And St. John's silence as to the Facts recorded by the other Evangelists is so far from being like a Contradiction to them, (as Mr. W. pretends;) that it plainly implies his consent to their Testimony, and an Approbation of what they say. SECT. III.
Disc. 3. p. 11.

M. I think it looks very suspicious at least that the other Evangelists shou'd represent Jesus as curing all Persons wherever he came: while on the other hand St. John though he speaks of a great Multitude of impotent Folk at Bethesda, shou'd tell us only of his curing one lame Man among them. Jesus cannot be supposed to heal many in any place, much less all manner of Diseases; or he had never let such a Multi-

SECT. III.

Disc. 3. p.
51.

tude of poor Wretches pass without the Exercise of his Power and Pity on them. Some good Reason then must be given for *Jesus's* conduct here; and such a one as will adjust it to the reports of the other *Evangelists*; or Infidels will think that either they romanced for the honour of their Master; or that St. *John* in spite told this Story to the Degradation of him.

N. I have said enough to vindicate the Conduct of *Jesus* in curing only the impotent Man at *Bethesda*; even supposing he did not afterwards heal the rest. And to adjust St. *John's* Account of this matter with what the other *Evangelists* say of his curing *all manner of Diseases*; I need only observe that they do not assert that he *always* cured *all* the sick or distress't *wherever he came*; but only that he healed all that were brought to him; and are therefore supposed to have apply'd themselves to him for relief. Such he never rejected. He sometimes cured others indeed, who did not seem to expect or desire it. But their good Dispositions, or their deplorable State, might recommend them as proper Objects of his abundant Goodness: or other weighty Reasons might render their miraculous Cure peculiarly fit and necessary. St. *Matthew* and St. *Mark* tell us that *Jesus* cou'd do no mighty Work in his-own Country, because of their unbelief; except his laying his Hands on *a few sick People*, and healing them. So that these *Evangelists* do not represent *Jesus* as exercising his miraculous Power, at all times, and in every place, alike. And on the other hand St. *John* does not say that any of those who are supposed to have lain at the Pool of *Bethesda*,
desired

Mar. vi. 5.

desired his Assistance, and were deny'd it. But SECT. III.
he mentions the *many Miracles*, the *many good Works*, or miraculous Cures, he wrought upon the diseased. So that there is not the least appearance of any Contradiction or Disagreement betwixt St. *John*, and the other *Evangelists*. His not saying in express Words that *Jesus* healed all manner of Diseases and Infirmitys among the People, can no more lessen the Authority of the other *Evangelists*; than his taking no Notice of the many particular Miracles, and wonderful Cures, that they relate. On the contrary, since he wou'd have been obliged to declare the Truth, in case they had any way swerved from it; his silence, and not contradicting their Account of Things, is in effect giving his Approbation, and additional Testimony to all that they say.

T. Dinner is upon the Table, Gentlemen.

M. It is very well. I wou'd rather dine, than dispute at present.



S E C T. IV.

S E C T. IV. *T.* I'M afraid Mr. *M.* we shall scarce be able to go thro' all the Six *Discourses* to-Day. As yet we have dispatch't but three of them.

M. The Objections in the three last are stronger too than those we have now consider'd; and will afford more Scope for Argument and Debate.

John ix.

N. Let us not lose time then; but proceed to examin the Miracle that *Jesus* wrought on the Man that was *born Blind*.

Disc. 4. p. 4.

M. As far as one may guess by the Evangelical History, Blindness was the Distemper that *Jesus* frequently exercised his Power upon: and there is no doubt to be made, but he healed many of one Weakness, and Defect or other in their Eyes. But whether he wrought any *Miracle* upon any he is supposed to have cured is uncertain. Unless we knew that the fore or blind Eyes he cured were absolutely out of the reach of Art and Nature; Infidels will imagin, and suggest, that he was only Master of a good Ointment for sore Eyes; and being successful in the use of it, ignorant People wou'd needs think he wrought Miracles.

Disc. 4. p. 9.

N. But I hope you will grant that “ if
 “ *Jesus* at any time used no Medicines; but
 “ only with a Word of his Mouth cured the
 “ Blind; and they instantly recovered their
 “ Sight, as the Word was spoken; in such
 “ Cases there must have been a real and great
 “ Miracle;

“ Miracle; let the Blindness, or Imperfecti-
 “ on of their Sight before be of what kind
 “ or degree soever; and whether curable
 “ by Art or not ”.

M. I grant that to cure Blindness in a Moment without the use of any Medicine, or other Means, is a miraculous Work.

N. Well: St. *Luke* says that *Jesus* gave Sight to several blind Persons, in Presence of the two Disciples whom *John the Baptist* sent to him. And St. *Matthew* tells us that *Jesus* cured two blind Men without the use of any means. He only touch't their Eyes; and immediately they received Sight.

M. I don't like that *touching* of their Eyes: there is something in it looks suspicious. How do we know but by that touch he anointed their Eyes with some Balsam or other Medicine that he secretly concealed in his Hands?

N. Whatever Distempers *Jesus* cured, he commonly laid his Hands on the diseased, or touch't them: and sometimes he touch't the Part affected: which was only a natural Motion of the Hand, used as a sign of his conferring upon them the blessing of Health. This motion was so habitual to him, that he even touch't the *Bier* when he raised the Widow of *Nain's* Son: and lifted up his Hands when he bless't his Disciples at his Ascension. No Motion cou'd be more natural; nor any Sign more significant of his miraculous Power, than his touching the Sick, or laying his Hand upon them. And there is no more Reason to fancy that, in touching the Eyes of the blind Men, he anointed them with any thing; than to suppose that he anointed *Malchus's* Ear when he healed it with a touch; or *Peter's* Mother-in-law, when he touch't her Hand, and cured her

SECT. IV.

Ch. vii. 21.

Ch. xx. 34.

Luk. vii. 14.

Ch. xxiv. 50.

Luk. xxii.

51.

Matt. viii.

15.

SECT. IV.

Mar. i. 41.

42.

her of a Fever: or that he besmear'd the *Leper* when he touch't him, and said, *I will; be thou clean*: upon which his *Leprosy immediately departed*. Seeing in these, and many other Instances, he manifestly showed a divine Power; and cured the most grievous disorders in a Moment, without the use of any means; what can be more absurd than to suppose that he wou'd in any Case have recourse to secret Tricks, and underhand Practices? Besides, I appeal to the most skilful in Physick and Surgery, whether there be any *Balsam*, or Medicine whatever that will cure natural Blindness, the very *Moment* it is apply'd to the Eyes: and whether such an instantaneous Cure is not to be reckoned miraculous, whatever Medicine you may suppose to be so apply'd.

M. We have nothing to do at present with your two blind Men whom *Jesus* cured by a *touch* only. We are to examin the Cure of Blindness that he wrought by the means of an Eye-salve made of Dirt and Spittle.

N. I mentioned the other, because you said it was uncertain whether *Jesus* ever wrought a Miracle in curing *any-one* that was *Blind*. And seeing these two mention'd by St. *Matthew* were (according to Mr. *W.*'s Concession) miraculously cured; there is no Reason to doubt but the Cure of the Man that was *born Blind*, was equally miraculous.

Disc. 4. p. 9.

Disc. 4. p. 5.

M. Sir *William Read*, tho' no Scholar, nor of acquired Abilitys in Physick and Surgery, yet cured his thousands of sore or blind Eyes; and many of them too to the Surprise and Astonishment of profess't Surgeons and Physicians. And you cannot prove that *Jesus* cured

cured worse or more difficult Distempers in the Eyes. SECT. IV.

N. But neither Sir *William Read*, nor any other Oculist, ever pretended to cure Blindness, without the use of proper Instruments, or Medicines.

M. Nor did *Jesus* in the Case before us. For he used a peculiar Ointment; and prescribed bathing in order to cure the blind Man. And tho' he recover'd his Sight upon it, this might happen without a Miracle. Our Surgeons with their Ointments and Washings can cure sore and blind Eyes of one sort or other: and here *Jesus* did no more.

N. If the means he used were not natural, nor any-way proper to cure Blindness; whatever the design of them was (which shall afterwards be consider'd,) the Application of such improper and ineffectual means can no more lessen the miraculous Cure, than if he had used no means at all.

M. Let us keep to some Method in our Inquiry. There are two Exceptions against the Miraculousness of this Cure: first, we know nothing of the Nature of this poor Man's Blindness: and then *Jesus* used human means in curing it. Now unless we knew what was the defect of the Man's Eyes; and whether it was curable by Art, it is impossible to determine whether there was a Miracle wrought in curing him. Dis. 4. p. 7.

N. Whatever was the defect of the Man's Eyes, or the Nature of his Blindness, it seems to have been of the *worst* sort; seeing he was Blind from his Birth: and his Case was in those Days reckon'd incurable: For, as he told the *Pharisees*, *since the World began, it was not heard that any Man open'd the Eyes of one that was born Blind.* Joh. ix. 32.

SECT. IV.

Disc. 4. p.
9.

M. Tho' he was *born* blind, Time, Nature, and Art might give him relief. Nature will not only by degrees work the Cure itself: but the seasonable help of a good Oculist will soon expedite it, tho' in time of Infancy he cou'd be of no use. And who knows but that this might be the Case of this blind Man; whose cure *Jesus* by his Art did only hasten and help forward. There is Ground enough to suspect that it was not a divine Power which healed the Man; or *Jesus* had never prepared and order'd an Ointment and Wash for him.

N. While you doubt of his acting by a divine Power in this Case, you grant in effect that he was indued with a supernatural or divine Knowledge: for, without this, he cou'd not certainly know the internal Frame of the Man's Body, and the Texture and Constitution of his Eyes; what steps *Nature* had taken towards *working the Cure* by herself; and what means were proper to *hasten* and *help* it forward. If he had such a supernatural Knowledge as this, it will be as good a Proof of his having it from God, and acting by a divine Commission, as any Miracle whatever.

ibid.

M. Without inquiring into the Nature of the Man's Blindness; I'll grant that if *Jesus* had cured him in a Moment, without the use of any means; it wou'd have been a real Miracle. But his use of Washing, and Ointments absolutely spoils the Credit of the Miracle: for we ought not to ascribe that Cure to the immediate Hand and Power of God, which Balsam and Medicines are apply'd to produce.

N. What-

N. Whatever might be the use or design of spreading Clay and Spittle on the Man's Eyes, and directing him to wash himself in *Siloam*; you cannot pretend that these were *human means*, that had any natural Efficacy in restoring his Sight. Mr. W. says that a *Balsam of Dirt and Spittle* is such an Eye-salve as for *absurdity, whim, and incongruity was never equall'd, either in jest, or earnest*: and that it is more like to put out one's Eyes, than to restore a blind Man to his Sight. So that it cou'd not be *naturally* operative and *effective* of the Man's cure. Now since the *means* that *Jesus* used on this occasion, or rather the Things that he did, were no-way proper or effectual to restore the Man's Sight; his Cure is still as miraculous, as if *Jesus* had done nothing to him at all.

SECT. IV.

Disc. 4. P. 10.

P. 11.

P. 12.

M. Why then did he use this strange Salve; when for the sake of the Miracle; and for the honour of his-own Power, he shou'd have cured the Man with a Word speaking? To this Question you must give such an Answer as will consist both with the Wisdom, and the Power of *Jesus*: else you must either give up the Miracle; or make him a vain insignificant and trifling Agent.

Disc. 4. P. 12.

N. To solve this difficulty it wou'd be sufficient to assign any one Reason that *Jesus* might *possibly* have for spreading Clay and Spittle on the blind Man's Eyes; and ordering him to wash or bathe himself in the Pool of *Siloam*. But I think there are two Reasons to be given for it. He might do it either to prepare the Man's Eyes for bearing the Light, when his Sight shou'd be restored; or to strengthen the Organs of his Sight; and there-
by

SECT. IV. by prevent his growing Blind again. His bathing in *Siloam* might answer the last of these Intentions: and the spreading Clay and Spittle on his Eye-lids, might serve the other. It is probable that his Eye-lids were fasten'd together by some glutinous Substance that distill'd from his Eyes, and was thicken'd by length of time. And it might perhaps be to moisten and dissolve that glewy Substance; and to open his Eye-lids, that *Jesus* put Clay and Spittle upon them.

M. How do we know but that this was all that was wanting to restore the Man to his Sight?

N. Because it is impossible but that such an easy and natural Experiment, as opening his Eye-lids, must have been often try'd, not only in his Infancy, (when it was observed that of himself he did not open his Eyes;) but as he grew up towards Manhood. Nor can we doubt but the other common Means and Applications were used to restore his Sight.

M. But why cou'd not *Jesus* as well have made one Miracle of all; and have open'd the Man's Eye-lids; and cured all the defects of his Eyes at once; without the use of any such preparatory, and corroborating means as you suppose him to have used?

N. Since it is contrary to Wisdom to multiply Miracles without Necessity; or to do that by a supernatural Power, which may as well be effected by common means; it was more wise and fit for *Jesus* to open the Man's Eye-lids by the help of Clay and Spittle; or to use any other natural means to prepare his Eyes for the better bearing of the Light when his Sight shou'd be restored;
than

than to produce the same effect in a miraculous way. For, Reason required that *Jesus* shou'd exert a supernatural Power *no farther*, nor in other Instances, than was absolutely necessary. If the Man's Blindness consisted in too great a Tension, or Relaxation, either of the *Optick-Nerves*, or of any of the *Coats* of his Eyes; or in too great a Consistence, or Fluidity, of the *Humours*; or an Inflammation of any of the *Coats*; or a Cataract; or other unknown disorder; the instantaneous curing of any of these defects, required a miraculous Power. And if *several* such defects, that did not depend one upon the other, were to be cured at the same time, without the use of natural and proper means; repeated or distinct Acts of divine Power wou'd be necessary to produce such distinct and *independent* effects. Now since to restore the Man to the free use of his Sight, it was necessary not only to rectify the inward Disorders and Defects of his Eyes; but to prepare them by Degrees for their natural Functions: *Jesus* might use some means to open his Eye-lids; and perhaps to strengthen the relaxt Muscles of his Eyes, in order to fit them for their proper Motions: which might be *one* effect of his bathing in the Winter. Another reason why *Jesus* used those means I mention'd, might be, because he knew the original Causes of the Man's Blindness; and that when his Sight shou'd be restored, it wou'd soon be impair'd again, if the Temperament of his Blood, and other Humours, or the Tone of the Solids were not some-way alter'd: and therefore he used such proper means as, by his supernatural Knowledge, he

SECT. IV. he foresaw wou'd prevent the return of that Blindness the Man labour'd under: and which probably cou'd not otherwise be prevented without a continual Miracle, or rather a Series of Miracles, to restrain the natural Course of the Fluids of his Body; or to alter the peculiar Texture, or the Tone of the Solids: one of which, or both, must at first have been the original Cause of the Man's being Blind from his Birth. So that, tho' the means which *Jesus* used cou'd not directly and effectually conduce towards removing his Blindness (which was of too long standing to give way to any natural Method of Cure whatever;) yet they might tend to establish and strengthen his Sight when restored; and to prevent the return of his Blindness.

M. If *Jesus* had cured him first, and then sent him to bathe in *Siloam*; there might be some Reason to think that the bathing was design'd to strengthen his recover'd Sight; and to prevent the return of his Blindness. But as Matters were managed, we do not know whether his bathing was prescribed to *confirm* his Cure, or to *effect* it.

N. Since his Blindness must have flown originally from some defect, either in the Optick Nerves, or in the Coats, or Glands, or Humours of his Eyes; and that such defect again must have been occasion'd by the peculiar Constitution of his Body, or the Temperament of the Blood, Lymph, or other Fluids; if *Jesus* had cured him, before the Tone and Elasticity of the Solids, or the Temperament of his Blood and Humours, were somewhat *alter'd* by bathing; either the Circulation of these in their natural Course, wou'd have

have affected and disorder'd the newly rectify'd Organs of Sight; and again have laid the foundation of a second Blindness, before the Man cou'd get to the place of bathing; (for the same Causes operating, will naturally produce the same effects :) or, to prevent this, *Jesus*, if he had cured him before bathing, must have wrought a Series of Miracles to hinder the natural effects of the Circulation, or Secretion of vitiated or disproportion'd Fluids, in Vessels that were either too springy, or too relax't: which having been the original Cause of his Blindness, wou'd in a very few Hours perhaps have again produced the same effect. For these Reasons *Jesus* wou'd not cure the Man's Blindness till he had first used such proper means as might prepare his Eyes for bearing the Light easily, when his Sight was restored; and prevent the return of his Blindness afterwards.

M. But if bathing cou'd naturally produce such a change as you suppose either in the Solids, or Fluids of the Man's Body, as to prevent the return of his Blindness; we may equally suppose that the same alteration by bathing might remove his Blindness without any Miracle.

N. There is a vast difference betwixt *curing* a Distemper, (especially an inveterate and chronical disorder;) and *preventing* its coming at first, or its *return* when once cured. The same means will not serve in both Cases. Health may generally be preserved by a temperate use, and orderly management of the six *Non-naturals*; (as the most natural and necessary Things in Life are called :) but when thro' any gross Neglect, Excess,
or

SECT. IV. or Irregularity in these, a Diseas'd fues; tho' the discreet use, and right ordering of the Patient's Food, Drink, Exercise, Air, &c. will conduce *very much* towards restoring his Health; some *other* means must likewise be used, both in acute, and chronical Diseases. I believe the most proper Judges in this Case will agree that Cold-bathing once used in *December* (when the Blind-man was cured,) might *possibly* produce such an Alteration in his Constitution, as shou'd strengthen the Organs of his Sight; supposing him at the very *instant* of his bathing, to be *miraculously* cured of his Blindness: and yet, I'm perswaded, they will not assert that Cold-bathing, might immediately remove the original defects of his Eyes, which made him Blind from his Birth; and restore him to the perfect use of his Sight. Besides, if the means that *Jesus* used were supposed to contribute *somewhat* towards the actual Cure of the Man's Blindness: yet if they were not *intirely* sufficient and efficacious; a supernatural Power was still necessary to concur at least with those natural means; and to assist their Operation.

M. Such a Supposition must either quite destroy the Credit of the Miracle, or very much lessen it.

N. What may be lost in the Greatness of the Miracle, will be got another way. For, to discover and know the most secret Causes of Distempers; the inward Texture, and peculiar Defects not only of the blind Man's Eyes, their Muscles, Nerves, Glands, Coats, Humours, &c. but of his whole Constitution, even from his very Birth; and to know
what

what particular Method of Cure his Blindness required; how far the means that were used on this occasion cou'd dispose and prepare the several Parts of his Eyes for their proper Functions, or strengthen them after their Cure, and prevent any new disorder; how far their chief Defects were to be removed by a miraculous Power; and how to adjust and proportion these natural and supernatural means, not only to the cure in general, but each to the other; so that no proper means shou'd be neglected, nor any degree of supernatural Power be exerted without Necessity: I say, to be able to discern and adjust all these Things required no less than an omniscient Power; at least it shows that *Jesus* had the highest degree of divine Knowledge communicated to him. And this proves that he acted by the Power and Authority of God, as clearly, as if he had cured the blind Man without the use of any means at all.

M. I can form no Notion of a true Miracle that needs either to be assisted, or supported, by the use of natural means. If the cure of this blind Man had been really miraculous, his Sight wou'd have been intirely restored at once; and all the defects of his Eyes cured, without the help of an Eye-salve and Cold-bathing.

N. You may remember I proved before in the Case of *Christ's* Transfiguration, that when there is a Concurrence of any natural Cause, or Circumstances, in an Event, which such Cause of itself cou'd not possibly produce; such an Event or Effect must be own'd to be as miraculous as if it had been produced without the Concurrence of any natural Cause

at

SECT. IV. at all. For, a Miracle suspends, or exceeds, the common Operation of mechanical Causes, and the natural Ability of human Agents; *no farther* than is absolutely necessary to produce the effect design'd. If *Jesus* had cured the Man's Blindness, without taking care to prevent its return; the design of that miraculous Cure wou'd in all probability have been quickly frustrated, by his growing Blind again: unless some such change in his Constitution had been effected, as might prevent it. And since it is contrary to the divine Wisdom to work Miracles without Necessity; tho' *Jesus* exerted a miraculous Power in curing the Man's Blindness; Wisdom required that he shou'd at the same time have recourse to such natural means, as, by his divinely-communicated Knowledge, he foresaw wou'd prevent the return of the disorder he cured. The same prudent Care he used in other Cases. When he raised *Lazarus* from Death, he immediately order'd those that were present to *loose him*, and *let him go*. And this he said, not merely with a view to the *Grave-cloaths* he was wrapt in; which hinder'd him from moving; but because of the *Napkin* that was *bound about his Face*: for in that Condition he cou'd not breathe freely. And when he raised the Ruler's Daughter, he not only put out the Croud of People who help't to make the Air in the Room too thick and warm, for her to breathe easily, when she was brought to Life; but likewise order'd some Food to be given, her immediately, to recruit and strengthen her: for tho' she was brought to Life by a Miracle; she was now to be supported by

John xi. 44.

Luk. viii.
55.

by the use of natural means. And it is likely that *Jesus* prescrib'd such particular Nourishment for her, as he knew was most proper to preserve that Life which he had so wonderfully restored. And now, Sir, I hope I have given a satisfactory Answer to your Friend's puzzling Questions; and have shown you a probable Reason why *Jesus* put Clay and Spittle on the Man's Eyes; and order'd him to bathe himself in the Pool of *Siloam*: that tho' these Things cou'd not cure his Blindness; yet they might be of Service in other respects: that the Clay and Spittle might some way prepare the outward Parts of his Eyes for their proper Functions: and that his bathing in *Siloam* might produce such a Change in the Temperament of his Blood and Humours, or the Tone of the Vessels they flow'd through, as might strengthen his restored Sight, and prevent the return of his Blindness.

Disc. 4. p.
15.

M. I cannot say that it is impossible your Notions shou'd be right: but I'm sure they are precarious and conjectural: and that a lively Fancy may easily devyse other (as plausible) Reasons for *Jesus*'s using Clay and Spittle, and sending the blind Man to bathe in *Siloam*. If I shou'd grant your Notions to be *consistent*, that does not prove them to be *true*. Intstead of giving us such Reasons as will sufficiently justify the Wisdom of *Jesus* in using *improper* and *ineffectual* means; you give us such Conjectures as are as likely to be false, as true.

N. Tho' I have offer'd some Reasons to support my Opinion, and to make it appear not improbable; I am willing it shou'd

SECT. IV. pass only for a plausible *Conjecture*. To answer your Querys, it is sufficient that I offer such a view of *Jesus's* Conduct in this Transaction, and such consistent Reasons for it, as *may possibly* be true. I don't assert that the Reasons I have assign'd were *certainly* the true ones. Perhaps other, and better Reasons may be given. But since those I have mention'd *may* be right; and that no Person will pretend to prove that they cannot *possibly* be true; we may fairly conclude from this view of the Case, that tho' the true Reasons and Motives of an Action (for want of our knowing all its various Circumstances) do not fully appear to us; we ought not to infer that the Action it-self is absurd, or foolish: especially when the Agent's Conduct shows that he is endued not only with an uncommon measure of human Prudence, but with a surprizing Degree of divine Wisdom, or supernatural Knowledge.

M. We may allow that *Jesus* was a good Oculist; and that he had great Skill and Knowledge (however he might come by it,) in curing sore, (or perhaps some blind) Eyes. But you can never make a true Miracle of this Cure: nor wou'd an unprejudiced Person imagin that there was any thing wonderful in it.

N. Even those who were most prejudiced against *Jesus*, (not only such of the common People as were influenced by their spiritual Guides, but the *Pharisees* themselves,) acknowledged that the Cure was miraculous; tho' they differ'd in the Conclusion they drew from it. *Jesus* having cured the blind Man on the Sabbath-day; some of the *Pharisees* said, " This Man is not *from* God, because " he

Joh. ix. 16.

“ he keepeth not the Sabbath. Others said, 
 “ how can a Man that is a Sinner do such Mi-
 “ racles?” They were much alarm'd and
 surprized at the wonderful Cure which *Jesus*
 wrought: they inquired strictly into the Truth
 of it: and ask't the Man again and again how
Jesus had cured him; and what he did to
 him. And tho' he told them that *Jesus* had
 anointed his Eyes with Clay and Spittle, and
 sent him to wash in *Siloam*; they did not ob-
 ject to the Miraculousness of the Cure; nor
 cavil at the Means that *Jesus* had used on
 this occasion. But, at first, they hoped to find
 out some fraud or mistake in the Case: and
 wou'd not believe that the Man had been
 Blind, till they called his Parents, and were
 assured from their-own Mouth that he was
born Blind. Then finding there was no room
 for questioning the Truth of the Fact, they
 repeated their former Cavil, that *Jesus* cou'd
 not come from God, but must be a *Sinner*,
 because he had done this Cure on the Sabbath-
 Day. The discourse betwixt the poor Man,
 and the *Pharijees*, upon this Subject, is very
 remarkable. “ They said to him, what
 “ sayst thou of him, *ὁτι*, *since* he hath open'd
 “ thine Eyes? He said, he is a Prophet.
 “ And when they call'd him again, they said
 “ unto him, give God the Praise, [of your
 “ Cure:] we know that this Man is a Sinner.
 “ He answer'd and said, whether he be a
 “ Sinner or no, I know not; [or, cannot cer-
 “ tainly tell:] one thing I know; that where-
 “ as I was Blind, now I see. Then said they
 “ to him again, what did he to thee? how
 “ opened he thine Eyes? He answer'd them,
 “ I have told you already, and ye did not
 “ bear,

See Joh. ix.
18.

SECT. IV. *W* *hear*, [or give *Credit* to me;] wherefore
 “ wou’d you hear it again? will Ye also *be-*
 “ *come* his Disciples? Then they reviled him,
 “ and said, thou art his Disciple: we are
 “ *Moses’s* Disciples. We know that God
 “ spake unto *Moses*: but as for this *Man*, we
 “ know not whence he is. The *Man* re-
 “ ply’d; why herein is a marvellous Thing,
 “ that ye know not whence he is, *though* he
 “ hath open’d mine Eyes! We know that
 “ God heareth not Sinners: but if any *Man*
 “ be a worshipper of God, and doth his
 “ Will, him He heareth. Since the World be-
 “ gan it was not heard that any *Man* open’d
 “ the Eyes of one that was *born* Blind. If
 “ this *Man* were not *from* God, he cou’d do
 “ no thing ” [*truly wonderful.*] Having no-
 thing to reply, they only said to him, “ Thou wast
 altogether born in Sins; and dost thou teach
 US? so they *excommunicated* him”. You
 see now, Sir, that not only unbiass’t Persons,
 such as the poor *Man*, but even the *Pharisees*
 themselves, who were highly prejudiced a-
 gainst *Jesus*, allow’d the Cure of natural
 Blindness to be a miraculous work: tho’
 they deny’d it to be a sufficient Proof of his
 coming from God, because he had cured
 the *Man* on the Sabbath-day; which they
 absurdly reckon’d a breach of the fourth Com-
 mandment.

See Joh. ix.
2.

T. If you have no other Objections to offer, Sir, you will give me leave to propose a difficulty that has occur’d to me since you enter’d upon this Subject.

M. With all my Heart.

T. Since St. *John* tells us that among other diseased and distress’t Persons, the *Blind* lay
 at

at the Pool of *Bethesda*, waiting for a Cure; SECT. IV.
 and that whosoever stept in first, after the
 troubling of the Water, was made whole
 of *whatsoever* disease he had; we have Reason
 to think that the *Blind* were cured at
Bethesda, as well as others. Now if bathing
 in that Pool cured Blindness, without any
 Miracle; why might not bathing in *Siloam*
 have the same good effect?

M. It is a very natural and pertinent Objection: I wonder that it escaped me. What say you to it, *Mr. N*?

N. The Truth is I have sometimes wonder'd to find the *Blind* reckon'd among the *impotent* or diseased People that were cured at *Bethesda*. And if I had any MSS, or antient *Version*, to support my conjecture, I shou'd be apt to think that instead of *τυφλῶν*, the true reading was *κυφῶν*: for then the several *diseased* whom St. *John* mentions wou'd be of the same kind: they wou'd all be strictly *ἀσθενεῦντες*, weak or *infirm* Persons: and as their several Diseases must have arisen from the same general Cause; (*viz.* a violent Contraction, or other disorder, of their Muscles, or Nerves;) so they might all expect to find relief by bathing in the Pool of *Bethesda*; whose Water, as I shew'd you before, when mixt and agitated by the bloody Water let down from the Temple, must have had a peculiar fitness to cure such sort of Distempers. But admitting the received Reading to be right; when St. *John* tells us that whosoever first stept in after the troubling of the Water, was healed of *whatsoever* Disease he had; these Words are not to be interpreted in the utmost Rigour; but with this reasonable Limitation;

SECT. IV.



tion; to wit, provided that such Diseases were curable; and not of the most inveterate kind. He cannot be supposed to mean that *none* who bath'd in that Pool ever miss't of a cure; however obstinate and lasting their Distemper was: but that, generally speaking, all sorts of lame and infirm Persons were cured there. Now seeing all such Disorders of the Eyes as either quite hinder'd People's sight for a while, or impaired it much, might pass under the general Name of *Blindness*, whether such Obstructions of Sight flowed from any Inflammation, Humour, or Defluxion of Rheum, or other common Causes; it is likely that the accidental Loss of Sight, arising from such Disorders, might be cured by the Waters of *Bethesda*. But it cannot be inferr'd from thence that the most lasting inveterate sorts of Blindness (such as the poor Man's who was Blind from his Birth,) cou'd be cured by bathing either in *Bethesda*, or any where else. Since the blind Man lived at *Jerusalem*, we cannot doubt but that he had try'd whether bathing in *Bethesda* cou'd cure him; and had found by Experience that his Blindness was not to be removed by any human means. Another Circumstance that makes a great difference betwixt the natural Cures of some sorts of Blindness, at *Bethesda*, and the miraculous curing of the Man that was born Blind, upon his bathing in *Siloam*, is, that *this* was sudden and immediate: while those at *Bethesda*, like other common Cures were probably slow and gradual. As soon as the blind Man wash't in *Siloam*, *he came away* (or out of the Water) *seeing*. But St. *John* does not say, (nor is it, in the least probable,) that whoever

stept

Joh. ix. 7:

stept first into the Pool of *Bethesda* was heal'd immediately. All that can reasonably be supposed is, that those infirm Persons who bathed there, grew better upon it, and mended by degrees; just as People are gradually cured by hot, or cold Bathing, and the use of such other natural Means as are prescribed for their recovery. The sudden and instantaneous manner in which *Jesus* cured Diseases, was one of the chief Circumstances that distinguish't his miraculous Cures, from natural ones. Either Nature, or Art, will cure Distempers gradually, and by slow Steps. But when all sorts of Diseases (the most inveterate and *chronical*, as well as the *acute*,) are removed in a moment, as soon as the word of Command is given; or the Condition fulfill'd, upon which the Cure is suspended; we are sure that such immediate Cures are effected not by Art, or by Nature, whose Steps and Operations are slow, regular, and gradual; but by the *Author* of Nature; who to show his absolute Power over all Things, chuses sometimes to restore Life, or Health, Sight, or Limbs, in a *Moment*; that is, by a Miracle.

T. The Objection that I proposed was, that Blindness might be cured without a Miracle, by washing in the Pool of *Siloam*, as well as by bathing in *Bethesda*. And your Answer consists of two Parts. First you say that tho' the slighter disorders of the Eyes, and such Obstructions of Sight as flow from accidental Causes, (and pass equally under the Name of *Blindness*, with the highest Degrees of it,) might happen to be cured by washing in *Bethesda*; yet we cannot thence infer that the worst sorts of Blindness cou'd be cured by

SECT. IV. bathing in *Siloam*, or any other place. And then you urge that the *sudden manner* of the blind Man's being cured, as soon as he wash't himself in *Siloam*, is a Circumstance that distinguishes *miraculous* Cures, from *natural*. But both these answers seem to me insufficient: because, for any thing that appears to the contrary, the Blind who seem to have been cured at *Bethesda*, might have laboured under the worst sorts of Blindness; and their Cure might have been as sudden and compleat, immediately after washing, as the blind Man's upon his bathing in *Siloam*. You have only supposed the contrary, without offering any Proof of it.

N. You cannot but know, Sir, that there are just and probable Suppositions, as well as precarious and arbitrary ones: some that are founded in Reason; and others that are quite groundless. We are now arguing upon the Supposition that the Cures wrought at *Bethesda* were *natural*. Thence I inferr'd that the Blind who might be cured there, could neither labour under the *worst* sorts of Blindness; nor be *immediately* cured. And the Reason is, because if their Blindness had been of the *worst* kind; and they had been *suddenly* cured of it; their Cure must have been miraculous, and not natural; which is contrary to our first Supposition. All Physicians will agree that the most inveterate sorts of Blindness cannot be cured either by hot, or cold Bathing. And Experience shows us, that the Operations of Nature, in curing *chronical* disorders, are slow, gradual, and regular: while on the contrary miraculous Cures are wrought in a moment. Now since the immediate Cure of obstinate Disorders is not natural,

natural, but miraculous; I had reason to suppose, that the sorts of Blindness which might be cured at *Bethesda*, cou'd not be the worst or most inveterate: and that they were not *instantly* cured, but gradually, as other natural Cures are effected. If you suppose that People were cured there of the worst sorts of Blindness; and in the most sudden manner, the moment they had wash't; this will prove such Cures to have been miraculous; and contrary to the slow and gradual Method in which all sorts of *chronical* Diseases are naturally cured. But such a *new* Supposition is directly contrary to the *first*; and quite takes-off the force of your-own Objection. For, if the *sudden* Cure of the most inveterate Blindness upon washing in *Bethesda*, was miraculous, as it must have been; you must for the same Reason grant, that the blind Man's immediate Cure, upon his bathing in *Siloam*, was equally miraculous.

M. How can you reckon his Cure sudden, or immediate, when several Hours might have intervened betwixt *Jesus's* anointing him with Clay and Spittle, and his washing in *Siloam*: during which time his Blindness continued.

N. We agreed before, that the Clay and Spittle cou'd not contribute to his Cure. I shew'd you that it might have been used for another purpose: and that his washing in *Siloam* might be design'd to prevent the return of his Blindness: and that therefore it was a previous Condition, upon which his Cure was suspended; and then to be effected *immediately*: as we find it was. The Reason and Necessity of that Condition, or Circumstance, of his washing in *Siloam*, I explain'd before: and the sudden and *immediate* Recovery

SECT. IV. covery of his Sight, upon the performance of it, shows that his Cure was truly *miraculous*: and that his bathing was only a requisite *Condition*, but not the real *Cause* of his Cure.

T. Gentlemen, I don't like so much dry disputing. Put the Glas about; and then you will go on the brisker afterward.

M. What are you doing Mr. N! You wou'd convince me, I suppose that Miracles are not ceased yet. I little expected to meet with a *Welsh* Divine that wou'd turn his Wine into Water. Such a sober kind of Miracle as this wou'd have look't better at the Marriage in *Cana*; than turning a vast quantity of Water into Wine. That was certainly as merry a Miracle to begin with as any Man cou'd have devysed.

Joh. ii. 1.

N. I'm ready, Sir, to answer every Objection you have to offer: but I must intreat you to keep within the bounds of Decency; and not to talk in the licentious manner that the *Rabbi* does. Give us all your Objections, without his profane Scandal and Scurrility.

Disc. 4. p.
25.

M. We are to suppose that if *Jesus* graced the Wedding at *Cana* with his Presence, there was no Excess encouraged, or so much as suffer'd at it: and that he only accepted of the Invitation, that he might have an Opportunity to make a proper Discourse to the People, of conjugal Dutys: tho' we read not of one seasonable and good Word spoken at it.

N. Tho' St. *John* has not recorded any of the good and seasonable Things that *Jesus* said on that occasion; we have Reason to think

think that as, by his Presence at this Marriage, he set an example of that humane, courteous, friendly, social Temper which he always showed, and recommended to his Disciples; so he used this opportunity (as he did every other proper occasion) to improve and instruct those he convers'd with.

M. We will suppose so, to please you. But pray what need was there for him to work such an odd and unseasonable Miracle as turning Water into Wine for the use of Men that had before *well drunk*; or (as *μεθύοντες* implys) were half-fuddled?

Disc. 4. p. 28.

N. The *Rabbi* seems to lay a Stress upon that term, as if it had been apply'd to those who were present at the Marriage-Feast. But this is an evident mistake. The Ruler of the Feast told the Bridegroom that other People used to treat their Guests with the best Wine first: and when they had *well drunk*, (or full enough,) then to bring out worse Wine for them: but that he had kept his good or choicest Wine to the last. Tho' *μεθύειν* and *μέθη* are generally taken in an ill Sence, for drinking to *Excess*; they are * sometimes used in a sober Sence, to signify drinking freely, but *moderately*.

M. But is there not a Comparison made, and a Parallel intended, between the Entertainment at *Cana*, and other Feasts? And does it not thence follow, that the Wedding-Guests had *well drunk*, before the new Wine was brought forth? What else cou'd the Ruler of the Feast mean by saying, " But
" thou

* See, *The Miracles of Jesus vindicated*. Part 3. p. 27, 28.

SECT. IV. “ thou has kept the good Wine *until Now*”.
 These last Words seem to be emphatical; and to imply that the Guests present had drank plentifully before; as others did on such occasions.

N. The meaning of the Expression is plainly this: that tho’ other People used to treat their Guests with the best Wine first; and with worse afterward: the Bridegroom on the contrary had kept his best Wine for the last part, or the close, of the Entertainment. This Remark is so far from intimating that the Wedding-Guests were *half-seas-over* (as your Friend smartly expresses himself) or *far gone* in drink, that it rather shows they were intirely sober: that their Palate was not in the least vitiated: but upon the first tasting of the new-made Wine, they cou’d readily discern that it was not only *good*, but better than what they had drank before.

M. Your Observation shows indeed that the Ruler of the Feast was sober enough: but for all that, the other Guests might have had their *quantum sufficit* at least, before they were *tempted* with better Wine than they had at first.

N. I know not what plainer Signs of an orderly Feast, and sober Guests, can be expected than there are in this Case. A sober Person is appointed Ruler of the Feast. A number of very grave and temperate Persons are invited to it. And the *chief Guest*, who on all occasions show’d himself remarkably abstemious, supply’d the want of Wine by miraculously producing a sufficient Quantity. What can reasonably be inferr’d from all these Appearances; but that the Guests, as well as the Bridegroom, were intirely sober?

M. Wou’d

M. Wou'd any grave, serious, and divine Person as you suppose *Jesus* to have been, have vouchsafed his Presence at an *extravagant* and *voluptuous* Wedding; where such *Levitys*, *Diversions* and *Excesses* were indulged, (among the *Jews*, as well as in other Nations,) as were not fit to be seen, much less countenanced by the Saint you wou'd make of him.

N. There is nothing in the account St. *John* gives us of this Wedding that can lead you to think it was in the least *extravagant* or *voluptuous*. On the contrary I have mentioned several Circumstances that rather intimate the regularity and temperance of all that were present. Tho' at Marriages, as well as other Feasts, excess and revelling are often encouraged, and too freely practis'd; it is unreasonable, and contrary to dayly Experience, to suppose that there are Disorders and Intemperance committed at every Marriage-Feast, or friendly Entertainment. A wise Man will no more be surpriz'd, or uneasy, at the harmless *Levitys*, or innocent *Diversions*, that are used on such publick Occasions; than he will encourage *Excesses* of any kind. And lest those who are of a sower, morose and unsociable Disposition shou'd have concluded from the serious, distant, and reserved Deportment of *Jesus*, that he was an Enemy to sober Chearfulness and Good-humour; it was highly fit and expedient that he shou'd, by his Presence at a Marriage-Feast, show his Disciples, that upon proper occasions he approved and readily encouraged innocent Mirth, Hospitality, Friendship, an obliging Temper, and every prudent way they cou'd take to show all due Respect, good Will and hearty Affection towards

SECT. IV. towards those they lived and conversed with.

Disc. 4. P.
30.

M. If *Jesus*, his Mother, and his Disciples had not been merry Folks in themselves, they wou'd have declin'd the Invitation of the Bridegroom: nay, if they had not been boon Companions and of comical Conversation, there had been no room at a Wedding for them.

N. Seeing such grave and serious Persons were invited to the Marriage, and accepted of the Civility; this is a sufficient Proof that the Bridegroom and his Guests were more grave and sober than ordinary; else *Jesus* and his Friends wou'd not have been invited. It cou'd not be expected that they wou'd, by their Presence, give the least Encouragement to any sort of Excess, or Disorder: they must rather have check't the Mirth, and spoilt the Sport, of such riotous and dissolute Revellers as you represent the Guests at *Cana* to have been.

Disc. 4. P.
31.

M. You may fancy what you please of *Jesus*' and his Mother's Saintship, but the very Text of the Story implys they were Lovers of Good-fellowship; or he had never upon her Intimation turn'd so large a quantity of Water into Wine, after all or most of the Company were far gone with it.

N. I showed you before that the *Rabbi* mistook, and misapply'd, the term *μεθυσι*; and that there cou'd be no parallel intended betwixt the Custom at other Feasts, and the Bridegroom's Conduct in this; there being a manifest difference taken notice of, by the Ruler of the Feast.

M. Is

M. Is not the unexpected want of Wine SECT. IV.
a plain token that the Guests had drank too freely. 

N. The want of Wine might have been occasion'd by their having more Company than they expected; rather than by any Excess in drinking.

M. It is very unlikely that more shou'd come to the Wedding than the Bridegroom invited. And as he knew the Number of his Guests; it is probable he made a plentiful Provision for them.

N. The Presence of *Jesus* might draw much Company to the Place. For besides his Disciples, he always had many Followers and Attendants, who came to hear his Doctrine: and these often past under the Name of his *Disciples*. Wherever he went, we find Multitudes crouding about him. And if this happen'd in some degree at *Cana*; it is easy to account for the want of Wine at the Marriage Feast. For we may be sure that the followers of *Jesus* wou'd be hospitably received. And if the poorer sort likewise tasted of the Bridegroom's Bounty on this occasion; the Wine he provided might easily fail.

M. Supposing that many poor People came there for a Refreshment; and that an unexpected number of Strangers followed *Jesus*; why must they all be treated with *Wine*? other Liquor might have served them well enough.

N. Wou'd you have had the Bridegroom treat them with *Water*? Wine was the common drink of the Country; and the only Liquor used at Entertainments. He cou'd not offer the meanest Stranger any thing else at his Wedding-

SECT. IV. Wedding-Feast. Now since *Jesus* by being present at it, probably drew a number of People after him, which occasion'd the want of Wine; he might on that account be the more willing to supply them with such a quantity as the present occasion required.

Disc. 4. p.
39.

M. You cannot think there cou'd be occasion for twelve or eighteen *Firkins* of Wine; which is the quantity *St. John* speaks of. This was enough to intoxicate the whole Town of *Cana*.

N. The *Syrian* measure which *St. John* probably meant by *μετρηταις*, held not quite a Gallon; so that the whole six Water-pots used at the Feast cou'd not contain above seventeen Gallons at most; and perhaps only eleven, or twelve. For seeing *St. John* does not tell us expressly whether each Water-pot held *three* Gallons, or only *two*; we have as much reason to suppose they held the lesser quantity, as the greater. But if we take the Medium which is two Gallons and a half; then the whole quantity of Wine, that *Jesus* miraculously made of Water, did not exceed *fifteen* Gallons. Now supposing that most of the Guests had drank so plentifully as to need no more: and that this quantity was chiefly to be distributed among the Followers of *Jesus*, and the Poor that attended the Feast; if there were but about a hundred of them in all (which is a very moderate Computation, considering what Multitudes always followed him;) each of them cou'd have had but little more than a Pint, which you will own to be a very *sober* Refreshment. So that this Miracle, which you inveigh against so bitterly, seems really

really to have been the first instance of that Charity and Beneficence to a needy Multitude, which *Jesus* showed on other occasions. SECT. IV.

M. You are got again to your Suppositions and Conjectures. *St. John* says nothing of any Poor; or of a number of People that followed *Jesus*: and yet you suppose no less than a hundred there; merely to take-off the excessive quantity of Wine that *Jesus* furnish't for those who had drank *enough*, at least, before.

N. I only suppose that there were several Poor at a Marriage-Feast: and that *some* of the Multitude that usually followed *Jesus* were likewise there. This Supposition is intirely agreeable to Reason, Custom, and Experience. Whereas your Suppositions are contrary to the known Character of *Jesus* and his Disciples; and to the *short* Account that *St. John* gives us of the Marriage-Feast. When Facts are briefly related, without the particular Circumstances that attended them, we must judge of the Nature and Design of such Facts, according to the Account given of them: and we must suppose the *unknown* Circumstances of them to have been such as are agreeable to *those* that are related; and to the Character and Conduct of the Persons concern'd. *St. John* tells us that when the Wine at the Marriage-Feast was all used, *Jesus* turn'd about fifteen Gallons of Water into good Wine. The Question now is with what view, and for whose use he did this: whether to make a *Company of Sots* quite drunk; or to give a necessary and moderate Refreshment to such a needy Multitude as we find in the Gospels attended him wherever he went. Seeing the *Evangelist* is intirely silent

M

upon

SECT. IV. upon this Point, we ought certainly to conclude the design of the Miracle to be such as was consistent with the Character of *Jesus*, and his general Conduct on other occasions. Now we no-where find that he ever encourag'd Excess: but, on the contrary, he appears not only temperate, but abstemious in the use of lawful Pleasures. And as he himself always practis'd, so he recommended to his Disciples, every thing that is righteous and good. Therefore, seeing on other occasions, he shew'd the greatest Tenderness and Compassion to the Multitudes that attended on him; and sometimes relieved their Necessitys miraculously; we have good Reason to suppose that the Wine he made at *Cana* was design'd, not to promote Riot and Intemperance, as your Friend absurdly imagins, but to give a seasonable refreshment to the thirsty Multitude that followed him.

T. There can be no Reason to think that any Multitude followed him *already*. His turning Water into Wine was the *first* Miracle he wrought. He had not as yet enter'd upon his *publick* Ministry; and cou'd not be known enough to have many Followers.

N. Tho' this was his first *publick* Miracle; it is likely he had wrought other Miracles of a more private nature before this; to awaken People's Attention; and to confirm the repeated Testimonys that *John* the Baptist had given to *Jesus*, as being the *Messiah*. However, this Testimony alone, from such an eminent Person as *John*, cou'd not but spread the Fame of *Jesus* every where. The Baptist declared that he was only the fore runner of the *Messiah* who was soon to appear among them.

them. And when *Jesus* came to *Bethabara*, *John* declared *Him* to be the Person he spoke of; the true *Messiah*, or *the Son of God*; and pointed him out personally to others. Upon which some of *John's* Disciples forsook their Friends and Employments, and follow'd *Jesus*. We have Reason therefore to think that several People might follow him for Instruction, when he was at *Cana*; tho' not such great numbers as flock't after him from all Quarters, after that the fame of his Miracles made him more known every-where.

M. Seeing St. *John* is so full and copious on some other Subjects; particularly in his long-winded Story about the Woman of *Samarita*; it is likely that if the want of Wine at the Marriage, had been occasion'd by unexpected Company of any sort, he wou'd have given us some hint of such an important Circumstance, for his Master's Credit; and to prevent the Suspicion of his encouraging Excess.

N. It is much easier to relate Facts concisely, than Discourses. St. *John* is as succinct in his Account of some of *Christ's* other Miracles, as of his turning Water into Wine. And it is likely he had not so much of the Spirit of Prophecy as to foresee that, in future Ages, a Sect wou'd arise, that shou'd exceed the *Saducees*, in Scepticism; and the *Pharisees*, in Malice and Bigotry; and put the most spiteful, unjust, and absurd Construction upon the Words and Actions of the most prudent, righteous, and beneficent Person that ever lived. But supposing that none of the usual Followers of *Jesus*, nor any Poor, came to the Marriage-Feast, (nor even to the *House*,) but those only who were invited; (which is one of the unlikelyest Suppositions that can be made;)

SECT. IV. yet many other Accidents might occasion the want of Wine, however sober the Guests might have been. The Bridegroom perhaps made too slender Provision for the Feast. He might have been disappointed of the supply he depended on: Or, the Wine he had might happen to be spoil't. The Marriage-Feast was probably kept a whole Week, according to the *Jewish* Custom: and *Jesus* might not come till the *third Day*; as the *Evangelist's* Words intimate plainly enough. Now either of these Cases will account for the real want of Wine, without supposing it to have been wasted by Intemperance. And the quantity that *Jesus* supply'd, cou'd not be too great, considering the Number of the Guests; and that the Solemnity was perhaps to last three or four Days longer.

Joh. ii. 1.

M. According to your own low Computation, fifteen Gallons must have been a Bottle a-piece for sixty People, after they had all drank enough before. And if the *μετρητής* held three Gallons as some learned Criticks suppose; then every Person must have had about three Quarts for his share.

See Joh. ii.
12.

N. There might have been many more Guests at the Marriage than sixty: but we cannot reckon fewer. For, *Jesus*, his Relations, and his Disciples, who were but some of the Guests occasionally invited, must have made a considerable Part of that number. As far as we can judge from the few Circumstances that St. *John* mentions concerning this Marriage; such as, a *Ruler* of the Feast; the *Servants* that attended; and the *six Water-pots* of Stone that were placed (perhaps in different Rooms,) for washing of Pots, Cups, &c;

&c; the Bridegroom must have been a Person of Wealth and Distinction, who celebrated his Nuptials with great solemnity. Now if a Provision of Wine was to be made for several Days, the largest quantity you can reckon the Water-pots to have held, cou'd scarce be too much. But since the *μετρητής* was probably a *Syrian* measure that held somewhat less than a Gallon; the fifteen Gallons that the six Water-pots contain'd cou'd not be more than enough for the Day when *Jesus* was present. There cou'd be but little left after Supper; and no danger of Excess, if all the Wine had been used. But we cannot suppose that *Jesus* wou'd produce the precise quantity of Wine that might be wanted, and no more. An abundant Provision was more suitable to his Goodness, and his beneficent Power. When he multiply'd the Loaves and Fishes, we find there were twelve Baskets full of Fragments left, after all the Company were filled. So when he turn'd the Water into Wine, he might chuse to make more than was immediately wanted. The report of this Miracle must soon have spread about. And it was proper to satisfy the Curiosity of those who were afterwards desirous to taste of the wonderful Wine; because it wou'd make the Miracle more publick and unquestionable. The *Wits* of *Cana* might fancy that the Wedding-Guests were all cut; that they had lost their Taste; and cou'd not distinguish betwixt *Wine*, and an artificial sort of *Punch*. But when these wary *Scepticks* heard that some of the miraculous Wine was left, and might perhaps taste of it themselves, and be forced to ac-

SECT. IV. knowledge that it was really good WINE, as the Guests reported it to be; this must have put an end to their Cavils; and have convinced every one of *Christ's* divine Power. Accordingly we find the effect of this Miracle was, that by this Manifestation of his * *Glory*, (or miraculous Power) his *Disciples*, or Followers, believed on him the more firmly.

M. There is no Reason to think that the Wedding-Guests wou'd leave any of the good Wine for the conviction of Unbelievers. No doubt they drank the Founder's Health heartily; and being encouraged by his good Company, they saw the six Water-pots fairly emptied before they went off.

N. Supposing it had been so; all this might be done without the least Excess. For having a Pattern of Sobriety and Abstemiousness before their Eyes, for whom they cou'd not but have the most awful regard; there cou'd be no danger of any Intemperance while he was among them.

Disc. 4. p.
32.

M. If *Jesus* had been so very sober as you represent him, he had never spoke so waspishly and snappishly to his Mother, saying, *Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine Hour is not yet come.*

N. The Forms of address, in speaking to People, vary much in different Ages, and Countrys. It wou'd look very rude and disrespectful now, if any Son shou'd say to his Mother, *Woman*—But in antient Times it was otherwise. Then, People were generally less

* *Δόξα* both in this Place, *John* ii. 11. and in ch. xi. 40. and ch. xvii. 22. signifies the Power of working Miracles.

less formal ; and more sincere. Titles of SECT. IV.
 Respect were seldom used : among the meaner
 sort they wou'd have been improper. In the
 best antient Authors, the Term *γύναι* is used
 on the tenderest occasions, towards Per-
 sons of Distinction, as well as others ; where no
 disrespect cou'd be design'd by it. Why then
 might not *Jesus* use it to his Mother, (who
 was of a mean Condition) when he reprov'd her
 for a Fault? He used the very same Appel-
 lation to those whom he *comforted*, or *com-*
mended. He used it to *Mary* herself, when
 upon the Cross he gave her the most distin-
 guishing Mark of his filial Care, Respect,
 and Love ; by recommending her to the
 Friendship and Protection of his beloved
 Disciple. *WOMAN*, (said he) *behold thy Son* ;
 meaning *St. John* : and to him he said, *be-*
hold thy Mother : upon which the Apostle
 took her to his-own home. There is no
 Reason to find fault with the reply that
Jesus made to his Mother. He only said *τί*
ἐμοὶ καὶ σοὶ γύναι ; οὐπω ἔχει ἡ ὥρα μου ; which
 shou'd be thus render'd ; *Woman, what have*
I to do with thee [now?] Is not my time yet
come [to be master of my own Actions?]
 This seems to be our Saviour's true mean-
 ing. And if we consider the superiour and
 divine Character he bore, as the *Messiah*, or
 the *Son of God* : and how rash and unbecom-
 ing it was in his Mother to take upon her,
 now after his entering upon his Ministry, to
 direct or advise him as to the nature, or proper
 time of his Actions, whether common, or mi-
 raculous ; we cannot but think he gave her
 a very gentle reproof for the indecent free-
 dom she took. He cou'd not say less, when

|| Joh. xx. 15.
 † Matt. xv.
 28.

Joh. xix.
 26, 27.

SECT. IV.  he meant to repress her forwardness for the future; and to vindicate his Authority and Independence. As for the Words themselves, they have nothing in them that looks *ill-natured, surly, or waspish*: and they might be spoken in a very mild and respectful manner. Indeed it is not so much from the Words themselves, as from the *accent and manner* in which they are utter'd, that we conclude an expression to be *peevish, passionate, or waspish*. The severest Things may be said in a calm and decent way: and words that are seemingly kind and respectful may be pronounc'd *snappishly*, or with a *sneering Aire, or Accent*. Now there is no Reason to doubt, but our Saviour's mild reproof was given in the gentlest and most becoming manner.

Disc. 4. p.
33.

M. Your modern Commentators are sadly puzzled to make tolerable Sence of these broken and abrupt Expressions of *Jesus; Woman, what have I to do with thee: mine Hour is not yet come*. It is such a witless Sentence as no Man in his *sober Senses* cou'd have utter'd,

N. I dare say you like the common Translation of *Christ's Words* the better, because you think it makes them appear abrupt and witless. But certainly the more difficult and obscure the common Interpretation is, it is the less likely to be true. *Gregory Nyssen* had Reason to supply a Point of Interrogation here; and to explain the Words as I did before. This removes all Obscurity; and makes *Jesus's Answer* to his Mother intirely pertinent. It is true she only said to him, *they have no Wine*: but he knew by her way

way of speaking to him on other occasions; that she meant these few Words as a request, or intimation to him, to supply some miraculously: therefore he reply'd, *Woman, what have I to do with thee* [now?] *Is not the time yet come for me to be Master of my own Conduct?* Tho' *Mary* understood this gentle reprimand to be a Caution against her intermeddling with his Actions for the future; she knew her present request was so reasonable, that he wou'd comply with it, as soon he found it a proper time. Therefore she desired the Servants to be ready to do whatever *Jesus* shou'd require. In fine, there is no greater Obscurity in *Mary's* Words, and his Answer to her, than we dayly observe in the discourse of intimate Friends; who often use, (and readily understand) such dark Hints, Intimations, and Replys, as to others seem quite senceless and unintelligible.

M. You may wrest and wiredraw *Jesus's* Words how you please: but the *Rabbi* has hit-off the difficulty better than *Nyssen*, and all your Commentators, Antient, or Modern. *Jesus* did not care to break Company so soon as he imagin'd his Mother wou'd have had him; and therefore he told her that *his Hour was not yet come* to depart. This Sence of the Words is plain, obvious and natural: while your Interpretations are all forced, and perplex't.

N. Nothing can be more easy and natural than that Construction of *Christ's* Words which I mention'd. The Sequel of the Story, (and particularly what *Mary* said to the Servants) shows plainly enough that her Words to *Jesus* imply'd a request, or desire that he

SECT. IV.

34

SECT. IV. he wou'd miraculously provide some Wine for the Feast. His Answer to this is intirely proper and pertinent. For, tho' he design'd to comply with her reasonable Expectation at present; he check't her forwardness in the Affair; and caution'd her against meddling with his Conduct for the future; either by way of Request, Advice, or Intimation of any kind: seeing the *time* was now certainly *come* for him to act independently of her, and to be intirely Master of his-own Actions. Her interposing her Advice either as to the Nature, Time, or Manner of his Miracles, or his ordinary Conduct, seem'd to call his Prudence in question; and to lessen his Character: and therefore he was obliged to rebuke her for her Indiscretion, and officious Care. As for your Friend's bantering Interpretation of this Passage, all I need to say to it is, that it seems inconsistent with the Gravity and Wisdom of *Jesus*, and the Dignity of his Character: it makes St. *John's* Account of this Transaction more *broken* and unconnected than any other Construction that ever was put upon the Words. And if it were supposed to be true, it cou'd not in the least affect the Credit of the Miracle; or be any Objection against the Truth, or the Greatness of it.

Disc. 4. p.
36.

M. If *Jesus* and his Friends stayed as long as the rest of the Company; however sober and serious they might have been, it is hard to conceive them less than Spectators, and even encouragers of Intemperance in others: else *Jesus* after their more than sufficient drinking for the Satisfaction of Nature, had never turn'd Water into Wine; if he had not

not had a mind (and took pleasure too) to see the Company merry. SECT. IV.

N. This is the same Objection we had before; only in other Words. I need not repeat the answer I gave to it. Since *Jesus* showed himself intirely wise and good, and cou'd not possibly take Pleasure in any kind of Vice, nor do any thing to encourage Excess; his supplying Wine for the Feast, by a Miracle, is an evident Proof that it was really *wanted*. And we may conclude both from the quantity of Wine that was made, and the occasion of it, that *Jesus* observed and knew the Guests were so sober, and well-dispos'd, that they wou'd not abuse his Goodness; nor Riot upon his Bounty.

M. He cou'd not be sure of that: and therefore it was quite wrong in him to lay any Temptation in their way. This made him answerable for all the Excess that his new-made Wine might draw them into.

N. If he had foreseen that some of the Company wou'd drink more than their share when he left them; that cou'd not be a sufficient Reason for his refusing a proper Refreshment to a number of sober and worthy Persons: and perhaps a necessary relief to the Poor, or to his Followers. When he multiply'd the Loaves and Fishes for five thousand People, it is great odds but that, after long fasting, some of them might eat to Excess: and yet the fear of that cou'd be no Reason against his making a plentiful Provision for them, even of more than they cou'd eat. The danger of People's drinking intemperately at the Wedding-Feast, ought no more to have restrain'd *Jesus* from turning an abundant

SECT. IV.  abundant quantity of Water into Wine; than the daily Excesses of Mankind ought to lessen the Almighty's bounty to them; and hinder Him from giving them yearly crops of Corn and Fruit, or a plentiful *Vintage*; sometimes far beyond what might suffice not only for the *Satisfaction of Nature*, but the most luxuriant Excess. And you might as well charge all the Gluttony, Drunkenness, and other disorders of Mankind upon their gracious Benefactor, whose bounty they daily abuse; as tax *Jesus* with *promoting Intemperance*, because he turn'd more Water into Wine than perhaps the Company then present had occasion to use.

Disc. 4. p.
36.

p. 37.

M. As for his turning Water into Wine, I know not what to make of it. Infidels will be apt to suspect that *Jesus* having some spirituous Liquors at hand, mingled them with a proper quantity of Water; which the Governour of the Feast vouch't to be incomparable good Wine, miraculously made by *Jesus*: and the Company being, thro' a vitiated Palate, incapable of distinguishing better from worse, and of discovering the Fraud, admired the *Wine*, and the Miracle; applauded *Jesus* for it; and perhaps became his Disciples upon it. This is an old heathenish Objection that one of the Fathers help't us to: and I don't like it the worse for its coming out of a *christian* Homily.

Secl. III. p.
95 & 96.

N. If I shou'd grant there was a *Possibility* of Fraud in this Case; I showed you before that this cou'd not lessen the Credibility of a well-attested Fact: and that seeing *Jesus* proved his being endued with a divine Power by

by working many *unquestionable* Miracles, wherein there cou'd be *no Possibility* of Fraud, Mistake, or Collusion; it is most absurd to suppose, or suspect, that he wou'd, in any Case, have recourse to Craft and Tricks, when he cou'd more easily, and safely, accomplish his Designs by a fair and open Conduct. But in the present Case, all Fraud seems to have been absolutely impracticable: and if any had been attempted, it must unavoidably have been discover'd. For, (1.) The want of Wine at the Marriage-Feast of a wealthy Person, was such an accidental and unlikely thing as no human Knowledge cou'd certainly foresee: and yet you must suppose that *Jesus* foresaw this, and provided a very large quantity of spirituous Liquors before-hand, to make that artificial *Drink* which you fancy he put upon the Company for good *Wine*. (2.) The quantity of Spirits that was necessary to make fifteen Gallons of Punch, must have been so large, that it was impossible for *Jesus* to provide, and conceal, and mix them, so secretly, as that they shou'd not be discover'd some way or other. Less than four or five Gallons of Spirits stronger than Brandy cou'd not suffice to make fifteen Gallons of tolerable Punch, or any artificial Liquor that cou'd pass for *Wine*. But it was impossible for him to conceal, and mix, so large a quantity of Spirits, at a publick Feast, where there were so many Witnesses of all his Motions. And it deserves here to be particularly remark't, that the greater you suppose the quantity of new-made Wine to be, the Miracle must appear the more certain and unquestionable: because

SECT. IV. because it must have been the more difficult (and indeed impossible) for *Jesus* to conceal and mix the proportionately great quantity of Spirits (as two or three *Firkins* for instance,) that were necessary to make a suitable quantity of *Punch*, or other artificial Liquor. But, (3.) it does not appear that such *Spirits* were used or known among the Antients; especially among the *Jews*. We do not find, that they ever drank any thing stronger than rich *old Wine*. The distilling of Brandy, and stronger Spirits is of later Invention. So that the *Rabbi* blunder'd grossly when he talk't of making *Punch*, as practicable among the *Jews* in our Saviour's time. (4.) There cou'd be no *Punch-making*, or mixing any quantity of spirituous Liquors with the Water, as he supposes; because St. *John* tells us, that the Servants fill'd the Water-pots with Water up to the brim: so that there cou'd not be room for three Quarts (and far less for some Gallons) of Spirits to be mixt in each Pot. (5.) It was impossible to make any artificial Liquor that cou'd pass for good *Wine*; such as the Ruler of the Feast own'd that to be which *Jesus* made of Water. His Compliment to the Bridegroom, upon this occasion, shows that he was intirely sober. And there is not the least Reason to doubt but that the other Guests were so too; and cou'd as readily distinguish betwixt Things so very different in their Taste, as an artificial Liquor, and true *Wine*. (6.) Seeing there was a large quantity of *Wine* made, we may be sure that due Care was taken to preserve enough of so choice a rarity, both for the Bridegroom's

groom's Credit, at whose Marriage it was made; and for the Satisfaction of such as might doubt of the Miracle, till they saw and tasted of the wonderful Liquor; and were convinced by their-own Senses, as well as by the Testimony of others, that it was really good WINE.

M. If *Jesus* had really, and miraculously made Wine which no Power or Art of Man cou'd do, he shou'd, to prevent all Suspicion of Deceit in the Miracle, have done it without the help of Water. If he be the original Cause of all Things out of nothing, as you say, why did he not *create* this Wine out of nothing? Why did he not order the Pots to be emptyed if they had any Water in them; and then, with a word of his Mouth, fill them with Wine instead of it. Here had been an unexceptionable Miracle, which no Infidel cou'd have cavilled at, for any Thing but the *needlesness* of it. But this Subject-matter of *Water*, spoils the Credit of the Miracle.

N. It can be no Objection against the *reality* of this Miracle, that it was not quite so great and astonishing, as if *Jesus* had *created* Wine out of nothing. Miracles that are not equally *great*, may be equally *real* and *true*: I mean, that when an effect visibly surpasses the Agent's natural Power and Ability; when he suspends, stop's, or change's *any-one* of the establish't Laws of Motion; and interrupts the common and steady Connection of Causes and Effects; such an Action is as *truly* miraculous, as another that stops or alters *several* of the known Laws of Nature, or Motion; and exceeds the Powers of all
created

SECT. IV.

Disc. 4: P. 40.

SECT. IV. *created* Agents. And yet every one must own that this *last* kind of Miracle vastly surpasses the other in *Greatness*. No Person, without the immediate Assistance of some invisible and superiour Agent, can in a Moment cure inveterate Diseases, without the use of any means. Such Cures are evidently miraculous; and far exceed the Power of any human Agent. But it seems to be a greater Miracle, and to require a far greater Power, (no less than Omnipotence itself) to give Life to the dead; or to multiply a few Loaves and Fishes, into a quantity of Food sufficient to serve five thousand People. If *Jesus* had, in a Moment, only turn'd *red* Wine into *white*, without the use of any means whatever; this wou'd have been a *real* Miracle, tho' seemingly useles; but it was a much *greater* Miracle to turn common Water into good Wine. And tho' it wou'd have been a more surprizing Wonder still, to have *created* Wine without Water; that can be no Objection to the reality of the Miracle he wrought, in turning Water into Wine. As it is contrary to Reason and Order to multiply Miracles without Necessity; so it is no less contrary to Wisdom, to work the *greatest* of Miracles, (as that of *creating* any thing certainly is,) when a *less* Miracle (as turning Water into Wine) answer's the Almighty's design as well as the greatest.

M. You say the general and chief design of *Jesus's* Miracles was to attest the Truth of his divine Mission; and to give an unquestionable Proof to the World that he came from Heaven to reveal God's Will to Mankind.

Mankind. Now this design wou'd certainly have been better answer'd by his working the most undoubted and astonishing Miracles; such as *creating* Wine; raising People to Life that were rotten in their Graves; and the like; than by doing only such Wonders as sometimes leave cautious People room to suspect that they were wrought by Fraud, or a Power that was merely human. Had *Jesus* always, or generally, wrought such astonishing Miracles as I have mention'd, Infidels cou'd have had no pretence for cavilling at the Reality, or Truth of them.

N. Certainly the divine Wisdom which influenced *Jesus* in all his Actions, cou'd best determin what kind of Miracles it was fittest for him to work on every occasion; and what degree of supernatural Power it was proper for him to exert. He wrought all sort of Miracles from the least to the greatest. And if all the Wonders he did, had been as great and astonishing as his raising some from the dead; Infidels wou'd still have found some *pretence* or other for *cavilling* and disbelief. If *Jesus* had *created* the Wine at *Cana*, instead of making it of *Water*, they wou'd have been so far from believing such an *unexceptionable Miracle*, that they wou'd have cavilled at it, in the same manner they do at the Resurrection of *Lazarus*, and of *Jesus* himself. You wou'd then have told us that St. *John* wrote his Gospel in his Dotage, after he had lost his Memory, and outlived his Senses: or that he design'd to impose upon the Credulity of Mankind, by relating absurd and incredible Storys passing the belief of considerate

See Disc. 5.
P. 12.

N

and

SECT. IV, and wise Men. This is the last refuge of
 ~~~~~ Infidels : and how absurd and inconsistent such Cavils are, will evidently appear when we come to examin your Objections against those astonishing Miracles that *Jesus* wrought in raising the Dead.

Disc. 4. p.  
 38.

M. Supposing *Jesus's* change of Water into Wine to have been a real Miracle ; no Person commission'd of God for the Reformation and Instruction of Mankind wou'd ever have done it here. “ Miracles  
 “ (as Mr. *Chandler* says excellently well,)  
 “ must be such Things as that it is con-  
 “ sistent with the Perfections of God  
 “ to interest himself in: and they must  
 “ argue not only the Power of God, but  
 “ his love to Mankind, and his Inclina-  
 “ tion to do them good” : which this Miracle of *Jesus* is so far from, that it has an evil Aspect and Tendency : and therefore it is to be rejected ; and no longer esteem'd a divine Miracle.

N. Since the many other beneficent Miracles that *Jesus* wrought every-where, evidently proved that he was commission'd of God, to instruct and reform Mankind ; we are sure that this Miracle of turning Water into Wine was far from having an evil Tendency. Nor wou'd he have done it, if it had not been peculiarly fit and necessary ; not merely as a Proof of his *Love to Mankind*, and his *Inclination to do them all manner of Good* ; but to attest the Truth of his heavenly Mission, and of that divine Doctrine which he *then* taught, and took all proper occasions to inculcate. The showing an uncommon Instance of Kindness and  
 Friend-



Friendship on this occasion, and perhaps giving a seasonable Refreshment to a needy Multitude, were but subordinate and incidental Views in this Miracle of turning Water into Wine. The chief design of it was to give those sober well-disposed Persons he then convers'd with, a manifest Proof of his being the *Messiah*; that he might induce them to believe his Doctrine, and become his Disciples. And we find, the Miracle had its design'd effect. For St. *John* tells us that upon this *his Disciples believed on him*: which cou'd not be meant of any who believ'd in him before; but of such of his *Hearers* as followed him for Instruction, whom St. *John* elsewhere calls the *Disciples of Jesus*. And such frequent hearers he might have, both among the Marriage-Guests, and among the People that probably attended without; who upon his turning Water into Wine, believed his Doctrine; and became \* truly *his Disciples*.

SECT. IV.

Ch. viii. 31.  
Ch. vii. 3.  
Ch. vi. 66.

M. I know not what effect such a Miracle might have upon others: but had I been there, tho' I shou'd perhaps have liked the Liquor, if it was really good Wine, and have drank my share of it; I shou'd certainly have had but an ill opinion of one who set up for a divine Worker of Miracles, with so ill a Grace.

Disc. 4. p. 30.

N. That was certainly a proper time for *Jesus* to work some Miracle or other; else he wou'd not have wrought one. He was now entering upon his Ministry. The occasion was publick. There were many Witnesses present; and such too as seem'd

N 2

to

\* See *Luk.* vi. 17. *Ch.* vii. 11. *Ch.* xix. 37, 39.

SECT. IV. to have had a favourable opinion of him ; and were disposed to receive his Doctrine. There was no diseased Person there to be healed : perhaps none at that time in the Town of *Cana*. What kind of Miracle now do you think wou'd have been most proper for *Jesus* to have wrought on this occasion ?

M. Any Miracle whatever, except turning a large quantity of Water into Wine.

N. Supposing the *Water-pots* had been fill'd with *Wine*, for the use of the Marriage-Guests ; and that *Jesus* had turn'd the greatest part of it into *Water* : wou'd this have pleased you better ?

M. Yes. That wou'd have been at least as great a Miracle ; and not liable to any of those Exceptions that ly against the other. There cou'd then have been no Suspicion of Fraud, or Punch-making : no danger of promoting Riot and Intemperance. This wou'd have shown *Jesus's* provident Care against those Excesses he had Reason to fear : that he not only practis'd Sobriety himself ; but encouraged it in others. It wou'd have display'd his miraculous Power as visibly as his turning Water into Wine ; and have shown more Wisdom and Goodness.

N. And yet if *Jesus* had actually turn'd a great part of the Marriage-Wine into Water ; you wou'd have made heavier Complaints against him than you do now ; and I think with more Reason. Then you might have reproach't him with *Ingratitude* to the Bridegroom, who had so civilly invited

ted him to the Feast; with *Injustice* in depriving him of his Wine; with *Envy* and *Ill-will* to the Guests who shou'd have had the Pleasure and Benefit of drinking it; with *rash-judging* and uncharitable distrust of their Sobriety; and with *Folly* in destroying one of those valuable Blessings that Providence bestows on Mankind. Then the turning of Water into Wine wou'd have been a Miracle that wou'd have pleased you better. You ought *now* therefore to own this Instance of *Christ's* divine Power to be an indisputable Miracle; because it *carried Goodness along with it*: and was a *Demonstration of his being Lord of the Creation, and Author of the Fruits of the Earth for the use of Man, in their Season*; else he cou'd not have produced the ripe Juice of the *choicest* of them in a Moment. In this Instance of *Almighty Power*, his *divine Care and Providence against Thirst and Want* were *visible*: and it was an *Admonition to us to depend daily upon him for the Comforts and Necessaries of Life*. In fine, by this Miracle, *Jesus* either showed, or encourag'd and recommended every social Virtue; Love, Respect, and Gratitude to Benefactors; Chearfulness, Complaisance, and Good-nature in Conversation; Affability and Condescension to Inferiors; Tenderness and Compassion to the Needy; Kindness and Hospitality to Strangers; and Union, Concord, and Friendship among Neighbours. So that in all respects, it was the fittest Miracle he cou'd have wrought on that occasion: it was truly useful and instructive: and perhaps it was pre-

See Disc. 3.  
P. 10, 11.

SECT IV.  ferr'd to be his *first* publick Miracle, because it was *popular*; and likely to lessen the Prejudices that the *Jews* had against him.

T. What cou'd lead the *Jews* to call *Jesus* a *Glutton* and a *Wine-biber*?

M. That is a good Hint. I quite forgot it. I cannot but think that this reproach took its rise from some unlucky Accident or other that happen'd at the Wedding in *Cana*.—

N. It is easy to account for that Calumny: the Miracle it self does it sufficiently. The *Pharisees* of old acted as Infidels do now: they put the worst and most absurd Construction on the Words and Actions of *Jesus*. They concluded as you do, that he wou'd not have turn'd so much Water into *Wine*, if he had not loved it; nor have gone to an Entertainment, if he had not liked good-eating. If after his publick appearing in the World he had lived and behaved himself as *John* the *Baptist* did, in a retired, austere, abstemious manner, *neither eating Bread, nor ever drinking Wine*; the *Jews* wou'd have thought him mad and melancholy; and have said (as they did of *John*) that he was possess't by a *Devil*. But because *Jesus* went freely to any Feast; and made no scruple of dining with a *Pharisee*, visiting a *Publican*, or conversing with a *Sinner*; but took all possible Opportunitys of doing good by his Discourse and his Example; and always showed himself humble, easy, sociable, and respectful towards all; therefore they reproach't him with being a *Glutton*,

Luk. vii.  
39, 44.



ton, and a *Wine-biber*, and a *Friend of Publicans and Sinners*. It was impossible for him, by any manner of Behaviour, to avoid such malicious Aspersions as his inveterate Enemys loaded him with. A Conduct different from that he chose, wou'd have only drawn upon him different sorts of Calumny. Their spite against him was implacable. And because his Behaviour was always strictly virtuous, prudent, exemplary, and inoffensive; this help't only to whet their Malice; and drew upon him all the unjust Reproaches that the most virulent Rage cou'd devyse.

M. You are so very dext'rous at solving Difficultys, that I reckon you can make a very credible and consistent Story too of *Jesus's* curing the *Paralytick*.

N. I see no difficulty in it but what may be easily solved.

Matt. ix. 8.  
Mar. ii, 1.  
Luk. v. 17.

M. In my Opinion, no Tale more monstrously romantick can be told. It is such an Accumulation of Absurditys and Incrediblety, that a Man of the most easy Faith, if he think at all, cannot digest. If a Man was to torture his Brains for the Invention of a romantick Tale of improbable and surprizing Circumstances, that he might hope to palm for a Truth, if it was but for a Week or a Day, upon the Faith and Understanding of the credulous; he cou'd never have presumed, I think, so far upon the Weakness of their Intellects, as to imagin that any thing so notoriously contradictory to Sense and Reason wou'd have gone down with them, as is this before us; which has pass't cur-

Disc. 4. p.  
62.  
p. 61.

SECT. IV. rently thro' many Ages of the Church, has been read with Attention by the Learned, and been revered by the rest of Christians without any Exception, or doubt of the Truth of it. —

N. Before we enter upon your Friend's *Absurditys*; let me put you in mind of some other *Incredibilitys* that I fancy you are not aware of: and which I think far exceed any that he has proposed.

M. Pray, let us hear them.

N. Since the *Evangelists* seem to have believed this Story themselves; and that the Fact, if true, was undoubtedly miraculous; is it not incredible that plain, artless, undesigning Men, whose Writings show all the possible Marks of Candour and Integrity, shou'd relate an unquestionable Miracle with Circumstances so *monstrously romantick* as you pretend? They cou'd not but certainly know whether the Fact was true or not; having had the surest Information of what they relate: and none of them cou'd have any Pleasure or Advantage in deceiving the World. So that if the Fact be barely *possible*, however difficult it may be to account for its Circumstances, there can be no Reason to question the Truth of it.

M. The Wit of Man cannot devyse any thing so *grossly and notoriously contradictory to Sense and Reason*.

N. Is it not incredible that Men who had Common-sense shou'd invent such a ridiculous Story as you say this is; and not only *hope to palm it upon the Faith of Mankind*; but effectually do it? If the Gospels

Gospels contain such romantick Fictions as you pretend they do, is it not amazing that those who composed them, (whoever they were) shou'd not make their Storys hang better together; and carry the Face and Appearance of Truth along with them? Is it credible that the *Evangelists* wou'd torture their Brains, and rack their Invention for the most absurd and improbable Circumstances in the Story before us, that the Wit of Man cou'd devyse? Rather than suppose such incredible Things, I shou'd suspect that my own Ignorance or Partiality misled me: and that my Prejudices magnify'd every little difficulty I cou'd not readily account for, into an *Absurdity* and *Incredibility*: and I shou'd be apt to conclude that what difficultys I cou'd not solve might be removed by others. How easily might the *Evangelists* have conceal'd the Circumstance of letting the *Paralytick* down thro' the Top of the House: and then all wou'd have been right. It does not add any thing to the Greatness of the Miracle. And nothing but a scrupulous regard to Truth cou'd have led the *Evangelists* to mention this Circumstance, while they omitted some others that were necessary to explain it. But of this enough at present. Let us now examin your Incredibilities.

M. The People it seems so press'd and throng'd about the Door of the House where *Jesus* was, that the *Paralytick* and his Bearers cou'd not get near it. But what did they so throng and press for?

Disc. 4. P. 53.

SECT. IV. *N.* Must we now account for all the Actions and Views of a mixt Multitude that crouded about a House 1700 Years ago? But probably, some wanted to see *Jesus*; others to hear his Doctrine: others to see his Miracles: and perhaps many joyn'd out of Curiosity, because they saw a Croud there.

*M.* He dwelt at *Capernaum* where he cured the *Paralytick*: so that the People cou'd not throng either to see, or hear him. For he tells us himself that a Prophet has no honour in his-own Country.

*N.* It is probable that the Croud about him consisted chiefly of *Strangers* who followed him from all Quarters, wherever he was. And since at this very time there were *Pharisees* and *Doctors of the Law* present, who came out of every Town of *Galilee*, and *Judea*, and *Jerusalem*; it is likely that the Multitudes who followed him with better Views, came likewise from the same (or other neighbouring) Places. “ And perhaps it was a Day appointed before-hand for healing of the Diseased, which might occasion a more than ordinary Concourse of the People to see him work Miracles, and cure the Diseased”.

Luk. v. 17.  
Disc. 4. p. 54.

*M.* Surely this Reason wou'd have induced the People to make way for the *Lame*, and *Blind*, and *Paralyticks* to come to *Jesus*: else they frustrated their-own Expectations; and acted more unreasonably than ever Mob did, or can be supposed to do.

*N.* Do you reckon it among your *Incredibilitys* that a Croud of People in different Places, and who had various Views, shou'd not unanimously agree in the same thing?

It



It wou'd be a kind of Miracle if they did. SECT. IV.  
 The Croud within Doors listen'd attentively   
 to the Doctrine of *Jesus*: and it is very unlikely, that a Man lying upon a Bed, carry'd by four Persons, cou'd be brought into the midst of a Room crouded as full as it cou'd hold. The Multitude *without* Doors might consist partly of sick People on their Beds, with their Attendants; and partly of those who waited to see them cured, when *Jesus* came forth. Now we may be sure that those who attended the other Sick wou'd not remove from the Door to make way for the *Paralytick*: but wou'd stay as near to the Door as they cou'd that when *Jesus* came out, he might lay his Hands upon the Sick, and heal them.

M. This is all Conjecture. The *Evangelists* say nothing of any Sick that lay about the Door of the House.

N. Nor do they mention several other Circumstances relating to this Story. Your charge against it runs so high, that I need only suggest such a view of the Transaction as is *possible* and consistent. You assert that it is *absurd, incredible and impossible* to be true: for that must be the meaning of its being *notoriously contradictory to Sense and Reason*. But your Proof of this charge consists only of some Questions, about such Circumstances of the Fact as the *Evangelists* have not so fully enlarged upon as they might have done. Now to answer your Questions, I can only be obliged to suppose such Circumstances as are *consistent* with those the *Evangelists* mention; and might possibly have been true. For if the Fact be barely

SECT. IV. ly possible, the Evidence for it is so full and strong, that it cannot reasonably be rejected.

M. You ought to suppose such Circumstances as are not only possible, but *probable* too.

N. Tho' I might dispute this Point with you, I need not at present: because what I suppose is no more than happen'd upon other occasions: and this is enough to show that it was *probably* so in the present Case.

Disc. 4. P.  
54.

I'll take no Advantage of Mr. W.'s Concession as to this very Point; but rather show you that he had Reason to make it. St. *Mark* tells us that when *Jesus* was in the same Town of *Capernaum*, and probably at the same House, where he used to be, "People brought to him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with Devils; and that all the City were gather'd together *at the Doors*"; where no doubt, the Diseased were laid: (for since there was a Multitude about *the Door*; we may be sure the House was full; as in the Case of the *Paralytick*.) On this occasion "*Jesus* healed many that were Sick of diverse Diseases; and cast out many Devils". I only suppose here that the Diseased lay *at the Door* of the House, or in the *Streets*: which was commonly done on such occasions. For the same *Evangelist* tells us that "Whithersoever *Jesus* enter'd into Villages, or Citys, or Country, they laid the Sick in the Streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the Border of his Garment: and as many as touch'd him were made whole".

Ch. i. 32,  
33.

Ch. vi. 55,  
56.

M. It

M. It will be easy to answer the strongest SECT. IV.  
 Objections imaginable, if you may be allowed  
 to *suppose* what you please. 

N. I only suppose here what is reasonable ; and what might very probably have been the Case ; since it was what happen'd on the like occasions. But supposing there were no sick Persons at all laid about the Door of the House ; and that there was only a mixt, various, unruly Croud there : is it reasonable to think that they wou'd *All* agree to make room for the *Paralytick* and his Bearers, when not one in forty of them cou'd hope to see him cured. None but those who were very near *Jesus* cou'd see him *touch* the *Paralytick* ; and observe his *immediate* Recovery. And this must have made the People the more unwilling to stir ; and resolute in keeping their Stations, just about the Door, and the Place where *Jesus* was to pass through. If those *without* the House had given way to the *Paralytick*, they cou'd not possibly expect to see the Miracle that was to be wrought *within*. It was therefore *their* Business to keep the poor Man *without*, till *Jesus* shou'd come to him : for then they might have had a chance to see him cured. And if those who were just *within* the Door, hearing *Jesus*, had made room for the four Men that carry'd the *Paralytick's* Bed ; they cou'd as little expect to see the Miracle, as those *without* Doors ; and might have lost their commodious Stations too ; so that they cou'd neither hear, nor see, any thing at all. If therefore the Croud *without* Doors, and *within*, had made way for the  
 the

**SECT. IV.** the *Paralytick*, they must unavoidably have frustrated their-own hopes of seeing the Miracle wrought. And it is so far from being incredible to suppose that they would not make room for him ; that it is really absurd to think that they wou'd. I have now dispatch't your first Absurdity ; let us hear the next.

Disc. 4. p:  
34

*M.* It is said the poor *Paralytick* with his Bearers cou'd not get to the Door of the House for the press ; and therefore in all haste is he haul'd to the top of the House ; and let down thro' a breach of the Roof into the Room where *Jesus* was. But what need was there of such haste and pains to get to him for a Cure ? It was but waiting a while, not many Hours ; and in all Probability, the Tumult must have been appeas'd ; and access easily had to him. But that the Bearers of the *Paralytick* shou'd enterprize a trouble and difficulty that cou'd not require less time than the Tumult cou'd be supposed to last, is a *little strange*, and *somewhat* incredible.

*N.* I cannot but think it wou'd have look't more strange and incredible, if they had tarry'd with the poor weak Man in the midst of an unruly Croud ; and let him run the hazard of being smother'd. If he was the only sick Person at the Door of the House, there must have been such thronging and pressing about his Bed when *Jesus* came out, that it wou'd have been more likely he shou'd be killed in the Croud, than cured. His Bearers at least might be apprehensive of this ; and chuse rather to undergo any trouble and difficulty,



ty, than let him run so great a hazard. There are many other Circumstances that might have determin'd them to the Course they took. They had perhaps waited some Hours already near the House. It might be towards \* Evening. They might have come from some neighbouring Town; and were to return before Night. The *Paralytick*, or one of his Bearers, might be a particular Friend of the Master of the House, from whom they had Reason to expect the utmost Assistance in what they attempted. And perhaps *Jesus*, being inform'd of the poor Man's being without Doors waiting for a Cure, desired he might be brought in before Him.

SECT. IV.  
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* See Luk.
iv. 40.
Mat. viii.
16.
Mat. i. 32.

M. Supposing the *Paralytick* in such haste and danger of Life that he cou'd not wait the Dispersion of the Tumult, but for want of a free entrance at the Door is, cost what it will, to be rais'd to the top of the House; and a Breach must be there made for him: the Question is, whether such an enterprize was or cou'd be feasible, or practicable. I have no Conception of the Possibility of it.

Disq. 4. p.
56.

N. Where do you think the vast difficulty lay?

M. If they cou'd not get to the Door of the House for the Croud, of consequence they cou'd not come at the Sides of it. How shou'd they? Over the Heads of the People? That is not to be imagin'd. Consequently here is another difficulty in the Story that renders it yet more strange and incredible.

N. Never,

SECT. IV.

N. Never, I dare say, were such *Difficultys* started, nor such *Consequences* drawn before. Because they cou'd not get to the Door of the House for the press, *therefore* they cou'd not come at the Sides of it! How ridiculous is this. Do you think the Mob furrounded the whole House as well as the Door of it? Since it must have had more Sides than one; if the *Paralytick's* Bearers cou'd not come near the Side in which the Door was, they might have gone about to another. If the House stood by itself, it might have four Sides. And if it was a large House in a *Street*, and the Front only accessible, as the Houses in *London* generally are; tho' there was a great Croud about the *Door*, there might still be room enough for the Bearers to get the *Paralytick's* Bed up to the top of the House. A space of only nine or ten Foot might suffice for that.

Disc. 4. p.
57.

M. But if they had room enough, where cou'd they have Pullys, and Ropes, and Ladders; without which they cou'd not hawl and heave up the *Paralytick's* Bed to the top of the House? These Things were not at hand; nor cou'd they be suddenly procured.

N. The Master of the House might supply them with every Thing they wanted.

M. If it was an Upper-room in which *Jesus* was (as Commentators are generally agreed,) the difficulty of getting up the Man's Bed was still the greater.

N. The House then might be about eighteen Foot high. But if it had no upper-

per-room, as the Houses in Eastern Countrys are often built; it might not be above eight or ten Foot high. In either Case there cou'd be no great difficulty in getting up a sick Man's Couch to the top of a flat-roof'd House. A Ladder and a couple of Ropes, (or *one* sufficiently long,) was all that cou'd be wanted. But in case *Jesus* was in an upper-room, as you suppose; the Stairs to it might be so narrow, or winding, that the *Paralytick's* Bed cou'd not be carryed up that way: and then there must have been an absolute necessity for letting him down thro' the top of the House, in case *Jesus* desired the *Paralytick* might be brought in before him; as he probably did.

M. When the Bearers had got the *Paralytick* to the top of the House, they must have had Hatchets and Hammers (which they cou'd not provide beforehand, not thinking of any use they cou'd have for them) to uncover the Roof of the House, and break up Tiles, Spars, and Rafters, and make a hole capacious enough for the Man and his Bed to be let thro'. But where was the good-man of the House all this while? Wou'd he suffer his House to be thus broken up; and not command them to desist from their foolish and needless attempt, till the Mob was quell'd? Is there nothing in all this of Difficulty and Obstruction in the way of the belief of this Story?

N. Very little besides what proceeds from your Friend's Mistakes, and absurd Suppositions. The Houses of the *Jews* were not ridged, but flat-roof'd, as they still are in o-

SECT. IV. ther Eastern Countrys. And within their Houses they had Stairs to go up to the Roof; and either a Door to go out at, or a Hole in the Roof, with a Cover to it, like the Hatches of a Ship; by which they went up on the House-top. In the Eastern Parts they often walk and sup upon the tops of their Houses, for the Pleasure of the cool Air, and fine Prospects: and some are so hardy as to carry up their Beds in the hottest Season, and ly all Night upon the Roof, or Terrace, of the House. The *Paralytick's* Bearers cou'd therefore have no occasion to break up *Tiles, Spars* and *Rafters*, as Mr. *W.* fancies. There was a Door already made for them, almost large enough to let down the Bed. But it seems to have been (perhaps an Inch) broader than the Door on the Roof: and therefore with the Consent and Assistance of the Master of the House, they widen'd the Passage *a-little*, to let down the Couch into the Room where *Jesus* was.

Disc. 4. p.
58, 59.

M. I shou'd agree to this Opinion of modern Commentators, if it were not liable to these Objections, *viz*, That it is not reconcileable to what St. *Luke* says, of their letting the *Paralytick* down thro' the *Tiling*, with his Couch: nor hardly consistent with what St. *Mark* says, of their uncovering and *breaking* up the Roof of the House: which Expressions the *Evangelists* had never used, if there had been a Door for him to descend by.

N. It is surprizing that your Friend shou'd

shou'd call such a well-known Fact as SECT. IV.
the *Jews'* having *flat-roof'd* Houses, an 
Opinion of Commentators. To be assured of
this, we need not consult *Drusius*, or *Light-* p. 58.
foot: there are unquestionable Proofs of
it from Scripture. The *Jews* had this
express Precept given them. "When
"thou buildest a new House, then thou
"shalt make a Battlement for thy Roof,
"that thou bring not Blood upon thine
"House, if any Man fall from thence".
Deut. xxii. 8.
This shows that their Houses were flat-
roof'd, and fit for People to go upon the
Roof: and that they were secur'd by Bat-
tlements (about breast-high) to prevent
any-one's falling down. Hence we read
of *Samuel's* communing with *Saul* upon
the top of the House; of *David's* walk- 1 Sam. ix. 25.
ing upon the Roof of his Palace; and of 2 Sam. xi. 2.
Abfalom's having a Tent spread for him on
the top of the House, that he might ly with
his Father's Concubines in the Sight of all
Israel. And our Saviour told his Disciples
that what they had heard in secret they shou'd
proclaim upon the *House-tops.* These Pas-
sages show the true State of the Case: and the
Words of the *Evangelists* are very consistent
with this plain Account of it. By the *Tiling*,
St. *Luke* must mean, the *Roof* of the House;
which, tho' flat, was probably made as the
Eastern Houses still are, with Brick or Tyle
laid upon Boards, &c. and cover'd a-top
with the best Mortar. By *uncovering* the Roof
St. *Mark* meant their uncovering that part
of it which was the usual Passage to go
up on the Roof; or taking off the Cover
O 2 that

SECT. IV. that was made and fitted for it: and  *ἐξερύξαντες*, which we render *breaking-up* signifies only their *widening* the Door, or Passage to the Roof *a-little*, to let the *Paralytick's* Bed go through.

Disc. 4. p.
59.

M. If the Passage was too narrow, why did they not take him out of his Couch, and let him down in a Blanket, a Chair, or a Basket?

N. He might be so weak and tender that he cou'd not bear to be taken out of his Bed; and far less to be put into such an odd incommodious Posture as you mention.

M. Is it credible that the Master of the House wou'd tamely suffer his Roof to be broken up; and bear with so much dammage without making any Opposition?

N. Without his Consent and Assistance nothing cou'd have been attempted. And these he cou'd not reasonably refuse, considering how very little the dammage must have been to him. The *Paralytick*, or one of his Bearers might be related, or intimately known, to him. Mere Humanity and Compassion might incline him to assist and favour such a pitiable distrefs't Object. Or he might do it out of respect to *Jesus*, who probably desired that the *Paralytick* might be brought into the Room; without determining how they shou'd do it.

M. Why did not *Jesus* to prevent so much trouble and dammage to the House, ascend thro' the Door you suppose there

there was to the top of it, and there SECT. IV.
 speak the healing Word to this poor Man? 
 To say that *Jesus* cou'd not, or wou'd
 not go up to him, I wou'd not, for fear
 of an Imputation of Blasphemy against me.

N. If he had gone up to the House-
 top, and cured the Man *there*; the Mi-
 racle cou'd not have been so *publick* as
 was necessary.

M. Cou'd not *Jesus* have desired, or Disc. 4. p. 60.
 even forced, the People to make way for
 the *Paralytick* and his Bearers to come in
 at the Door of the House? Being omni-
 potent, he might either by force, or per-
 swasion; have made the Croud however
 mobbish to retreat. And why did he not?
 This is the most incredible Part of the
 whole Story, that reflects on the Wisdom,
 the Power and Goodness of *Jesus*. And
 I think it is impossible for Divines with all
 their Wit, Penetration, and Sagacity to get
 over it.

N. It wou'd probably have required a
 miraculous Power to aw and influence such
 a tumultuous Croud as was within the
 House, and about the Door. And it was
 contrary to Wisdom for *Jesus* to work a
 Miracle; when the same End cou'd be bet-
 ter obtain'd by natural means. Or if a
 Miracle had not been necessary to make
 way for the *Paralytick*: yet it wou'd have
 disturb'd the whole Audience, to have
 brought him in thro' the Croud: and some
 time at least must have been lost; which
Jesus employed better in instructing his nu-
 merous Hearers within.

SECT. IV.

M. Why then did he not go out to the Door, and cure the poor Man in the Presence of the Multitude?

N. Because the proper Witnesses who were to see the Miracle, cou'd not have been there.

M. What Witnesses do you mean?

Mar. ii. 6.

Luk. v. 17.

N. The *Scribes* and *Pharisees* and *Doctors* of the Law, who were sitting by *Jesus*; and had come out of every Town of *Galilee*, and *Judea*, and *Jerusalem*.

M. They might have followed *Jesus* to the Door to see the Miracle.

N. But it was uncertain whether they wou'd or not. They probably came to *Jesus*, not to be convinced of his Doctrine, but to cavil at it: and therefore might rather chuse not to have seen such an unquestionable Miracle as his curing the *Paralytick*. However they were most unexceptionable Witnesses: and it was expedient and necessary that the Miracle shou'd be wrought in *their* Presence. It was fit that they shou'd see the *Paralytick* before his Cure, as well as after it; and there was no way so proper for this, as letting him down by Ropes thro' the Door, or Passage to the Roof of the House. If *Jesus* had either gone out to cure him at the Door; or forced the Croud to make way for him and his Bearers to come in; it wou'd have disturb'd the whole Assembly: and the *Pharisees* and *Scribes* cou'd not easily have had their proper Seats, near *Jesus*, to see the Miracle. But as the matter was mannag'd, the Man was let down into the midst of them before *Jesus*. By this means

Luk. v. 19.

means they had leisure and a fair opportunity, to see the *Paralytick's* weak and helpless Case. Some of them might know him: and all must have been convinced of his miraculous Cure. *Jesus* first said to him, *Son, be of good cheer, thy Sins are forgiven thee.* Upon which the *Pharisees* began to reason (or conclude) within themselves, that *Jesus* blasphemed; because he took upon him to *forgive Sins*; which they thought no Person cou'd do but God only. This gave *Jesus* an opportunity of showing them his divine or supernatural Knowledge, by telling them their secret Thoughts: for he said to them, *why reason ye (or think evil) in your Hearts?*

Ver. 20.

Matt. ix. 4.

T. This was no satisfactory Proof of his supernatural Knowledge, or discovering the Secrets of their Hearts. He might have heard them Reasoning among themselves. *Ev* (which I reckon is the Preposition used here) signifies among, as well as within. So that he might perceive, or know the Thoughts of their Hearts by bearing them speak softly one to another. St. *Luke* only says that the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* began to reason, or argue: which supposes that they spake; and that *Jesus* might over-hear them.

Ch. v. 21.

N. St. *Luke's* meaning appears clearly from the following Words; *what Reason ye in your Hearts?* The three *Evangelists* agree in this, that it was not the outward Reasoning or Discourse of the *Pharisees*, but their secret Thoughts that *Jesus* perceived, and found fault with. St. *Mat-*

thew

SECT. IV. *thow* tells us that *Jesus* knowing their Thoughts, said, *wherefore think ye evil in your Hearts*; and St. *Mark* too speaks of the reasoning of their *Hearts*; and says that *Jesus* perceiv'd in (or by) his *Spirit*, (and not by *hearing*,) that they so reasoned *within themselves*; and ask't them, "Whe-
 "ther is it easier to say to the Sick of
 "the Palsy, *thy Sins are forgiven thee*; or
 "to say, *arise; take up thy Bed and walk?*
 "But that ye may know that *the Son of*
 "*Man* hath Power [or *Authority*] on Earth,
 "to forgive Sins; (he saith to the Sick
 "of the Palsy,) I say unto thee, arise, and
 "take up thy Bed, and go thy way un-
 "to thine House. And immediately he
 "arose, took up the Bed, and went forth
 "before them all: insomuch that they
 "were all amazed and glorified God,
 "who had given such Power to Men".
 Mat. ix. 9. It is impossible to describe, or conceive the transporting Joy of the poor Man; the pleasing Wonder of the Multitude; or the perplexing Amazement of the *Phari-sees*, and the Confusion they were cover'd with, on this occasion. They had probably been disputing with *Jesus* concerning his Doctrine, his Miracles, and Authority; and had urged all their usual Cavils against them; which were at once confuted by the *Paralytick's* being providentially brought in, and miraculously cured before their Eyes. Here was no room for farther cavilling. Their Senses showed them the Man's Distemper and languishing Condition. The strength of *Imagination* could
 here

here do nothing towards his Cure. There were no *means* used. *Jesus* first convinced them of his divine Knowledge, by disclosing to them their secret Thoughts, and reasoning, upon what he had said: and then, to convince them likewise of his divine Power and Authority, he expressly *Appeals* to the Miracle he was going to work; and in a Moment restored the *Paralytick* to perfect Health.

M. You will excuse my leaving you, Gentlemen. This Room is too close; I must take a little fresh Air.

T. We will follow you, Sir.

N. What invincible Prejudices must a Man labour under, and how deplorable is the State of his mind, when he shuts his Eyes against Conviction, (as your Friend seems to do;) and wou'd rather say, or suffer, any thing whatever, than own himself to be in a mistake. All you can hope to do with such a Man is to silence him. If he had Sense enough to be convinced of his Errors, he has not Candour enough to acknowledge them. He is such an implicit Follower of Mr. *W*, that he believes every thing *he* says. He has got all his *Discourses* by heart; and repeats his Objections almost *verbatim*: nay, he is so weak as to seem pleased with the Introduction to his Cavils against the Cure of the *Paralytick*; tho' it is so extravagantly foolish, so full of Triumph, and an insolent Contempt of Mankind, that I thought it cou'd not but sink his Credit with his fondest Admirers. Never was
such

SECT. IV.  such a Preamble made to such frivolous and trifling Objections. You will allow me now to call them trifling, and to triumph a little in my turn: for I have shown you that there is nothing in the whole Story that reflects in the least either upon the Wisdom, Power, or Goodness of *Jesus*: but that all of them were remarkably display'd in ordering the Circumstances of the *Paralytick's* Cure in the manner that the *Evangelists* have related.

T. Mr. W's strong Imagination leads him to exaggerate Things too much; and to talk in the hyperbolical strain. This gives his Adversarys a great advantage over him. He is generally most positive in his Assertions when his Proofs are weakest: and he talks with least Assurance when he has something that is plausible to offer.

N. I own he has Wit enough, such as it is; but surely no Man ever argued more weakly than he does. One wou'd think he hoped to jeer People out of their Senses, as well as their Faith; and to promote his wild Notions by mere Clamour, and Scolding, and a matchless Assurance. He may delude the ignorant and thoughtless: but he can never influence those who have Sense enough to distinguish betwixt Raillery, and Reasoning; a spiteful Jest, and a solid Argument. You will excuse my speaking so freely, Sir, of one whom you are pleased to call your Friend.

T. I once admired him much: but he sinks dayly in my esteem. He is a divert-

diverting Companion however, whom I cannot decently break with, were I inclined to it. You will ride out with us this Afternoon. Mr. M. has a mind to take a view of the Country from the top of the Hill.

N. I chuse rather to go home, Sir, and will wait on you in the Evening.

T. We will expect you then precisely at Six.





S E C T. V.

SECT. V. *M.* **Y**OU seem impatient Mr. *N.* to renew our Debate: I fancy you have some Hopes of converting me.

N. No, Sir: I shou'd as soon hope to convert Mr. *W.* I doubt whether the raising one from the dead cou'd convince you.

M. I own it wou'd not, unless I were very sure that the raised Person had been really dead. But you are such a thorow-paced Believer that I reckon you are as fully perswaded that *Jesus* raised the Ruler's Daughter, the Widow's Son, and *Lazarus* to Life, as if you had *seen* these Miracles.

N. Since they are attested by credible Witnesses who cou'd not be mistaken in what they relate, and in their Writings have given undoubted Proofs of their Sincerity: such unquestionable Evidence is not to be invalidated by mere Suspensions, Conjectures, and such little Difficultys as your Friend uses to call *Incredibilitys*. You cannot justify your disbelief of these Facts, without proving that there are *real* Absurdities,

Matt. ix.

18.

Mar. v. 22.

Luk. vii. 11.

Joh. xi.

furditys, or such inconsistent and contradictory Circumstances in the account we have of them in the Gospels, as manifestly show them to be false and incredible.

SECT. V.



M. Without doubt the restoring a Person truly dead to Life again, is a stupendous Miracle. And I agree with Mr. W. that two or three such Miracles well circumstanced, and credibly reported, are enough to convince Mankind that the Author of them was a divine Agent, and invested with the Power of God: else he cou'd not have done them. But none of the three Miracles that *Jesus* wrought in raising the dead will stand its Ground against such Exceptions as may be made to them.

Disc. 5. p. 3.

N. The *Evangelists* have recorded upwards of twenty stupendous Miracles well circumstanced, and credibly reported: such as his feeding thousands of People with a few Loaves and Fishes; and curing the Blind, the Lame, the Dropsical, the Leprous, the Paralytick, and others, in a Moment; without the use of any means. These are as undoubted and as stupendous Miracles as raising the dead. And he who cou'd do such astonishing things, showed that he acted by a divine Power: and that therefore he was *able* to raise the dead. Now since *Christ's* having *actually* done this is better attested than any antient Fact that you firmly believe; you ought either to acknowledge that *Jesus* raised those three Persons who are mention'd in the Gospels; or you shou'd reject all human Testimony,

under

SECT. V. under the pretence of a *Possibility* of *Fraud*, or *Mistake*, and the danger of *Delusion*.

Disc. 5. p.
6.

M. The preposterous order of time in which these three Miracles are related, brings them all under Suspicion of Fable and Forgery. The Resurrection of *Lazarus* is certainly the greatest of the three: but since this is mention'd only by St. *John*, who wrote his Gospel long after the other *Evangelists*, and about sixty Years after *Christ's* Ascension; here is too much room for cavil, and doubting whether this Story be not intirely his-own Invention. For, what cou'd be the Reason that the other *Evangelists* shou'd omit this remarkable Miracle of *Lazarus*? They cou'd not forget it; nor be ignorant of it, if the Story had been really true. And to assign any other Reason than Ignorance or Forgetfulness is hard, and perhaps impossible.

N. Tho' this is a plausible Objection, it is far from being of such force as to overthrow St. *John's* Testimony. To solve this difficulty, I must premise the following Observations. (1.) It will be readily granted that it was fitter the Doctrine and chief Actions of *Jesus* shou'd be recorded by *several* Persons than by one: because the Testimony of different Persons equally credible, is more satisfactory than the Evidence of one only. (2.) Since *Jesus* wrought many and various Miracles; and that a few of them were a sufficient Proof of his divine Authority, it cou'd not be expected that each *Evangelist* shou'd relate *all* the wonderful Actions of *Jesus*, but only *some* of the most remarkable. If each had recorded all his most stupendous Miracles,

cles, Infidels wou'd have said that the *Evangelists* had concerted Measures together beforehand; or copy'd one from the other: and their Testimony wou'd have appear'd so intirely the same, that you wou'd then have told us their several Narratives were but *one* Gospel: and that the Testimony of the *four Evangelists* cou'd amount to no more than the Evidence of that one Person who wrote *first*. The three other Gospels wou'd then have been only a tedious Repetition of the same Things, without that variety of Facts, Narration, and Style, which now distinguishes the one from the other; and makes the perusal of them all equally pleasant and instructive. (3.) Seeing the *Evangelists* determin'd to confine their Narratives within a very short Compass; and that it was necessary the particular *Accounts* they resolv'd to give of *Christ's* Doctrine, Miracles, Sufferings, and Resurrection, shou'd bear some reasonable Proportion one to the other, and to the general Plan of their Work; they were oblig'd to chuse out only a *few* (in Comparison) of the numerous Miracles that *Jesus* wrought, to be concisely recorded in their Gospels. And in their choice they might be influenced by various Views; as I had occasion to observe before. Perhaps *Matthew* chose such Miracles chiefly as he himself saw *Jesus* do; because they must have made a deeper Impression on his mind; and be more circumstantially remember'd than such as he had been inform'd of by the other Apostles. And if he happen'd not
to

SECT. V. to be present when *Lazarus* was raised,  that might be one Reason for his leaving it to be recorded by some other of the Apostles who did see it. *Mark* and *Luke* too might chuse to record those Miracles *only* which they were assured of by such of the Apostles as were *Eyewitnesses*. And perhaps all the three *Evangelists* sometimes preferr'd such Miracles as they severally thought most important, or astonishing; about which they might differ as much in their Opinions as others do now. Hence must necessarily arise a pleasing and useful variety in their Gospels. And from this variety joyn'd with a manifest Unity and Agreement as to the Truth, Design, and the Testimony of each *Evangelist*, there results such a beautiful Harmony, and such a convincing Evidence of their Candour, and of the Credibility of their several Gospels as is almost irresistible. And seeing the different Circumstances with which they relate the same Facts are not contradictory, but truly consistent one with another; *that* difference is so far from lessening the Credibility of their Testimony, that it strengthens it much: because it evidently shows, that they did not consult together; but, at different times, recorded the same Truths, and Facts, with no greater variety of Circumstances and Expression, than must have been expected in the concurring Testimonys of four different Persons, whose Talents, Capacities, and Style, were various —

M. Tho'

M. Tho' it cou'd not be expected that each SECT. V.
of the Evangelists shou'd relate *all* the most
surprizing Miracles that *Jesus* wrought ;
yet one wou'd think they shou'd all have
taken Notice of such a stupendous one as
the Resurrection of *Lazarus*. They have all
mention'd *Christ's* feeding five thousand Peo-
ple with five Loaves, and two Fishes : and
there was at least as much reason for their
recording the other, which was certainly a
more astonishing Miracle.

N. That may be question'd. But you
stopt me when I was going to observe, (4.)
That the raising of *Lazarus* and the Widow's
Son, are not the only signal Miracles that
St. *Matthew* has omitted to relate. If they
were, there wou'd have been greater force in
the Objection. He does not mention the
miraculous Cures of the ten *Lepers* ; of the
Man that had a *Dropsy* ; the Woman that
was *bowed-together* ; and of *Malchus* : all
which are recorded by St. *Luke* alone ; and
are, in my Opinion, as stupendous Wonders
as raising the dead. Nay, which is more
strange still, St. *Matthew* says nothing of
Christ's Ascension into Heaven ; which is
certainly a more signal Miracle, and what
tended more to the Honour of *Jesus*, than his
raising *Lazarus* from the dead. But can you
think it reasonable to question the Truth of
all these Facts merely because St. *Matthew*
has not mentioned them ? Tho' the *Ascension*
of *Jesus* was a necessary Consequence of his
Resurrection, and what he himself as plain-
ly foretold as his rising again ; yet it is pro-
bable that St. *Matthew* wou'd have menti-
P oned

Luk. xvii.
12.
Ch. xiv. 24.
Ch. xiii. 10.
Ch. xxii. 50.

SECT. V.  oned it, if it had occur'd to his Thoughts at the time when he *finish't* his Gospel. His omitting this, and the Resurrection of *Lazarus*, and some other signal Miracles, cou'd neither proceed from Ignorance, nor a *total* Forgetfulness of them. And it will be difficult to assign any other Reason of this omission, than an accidental *Inattention*, or *Inadvertency*.

M. It is highly improbable that St. *Matthew* shou'd forget some of the most astonishing Miracles of *Jesus*; especially seeing he was so exact and punctual in relating many others that are confessedly of less importance.

N. There is a great difference betwixt his *quite forgetting* such stupendous Miracles as the Ascension of *Christ*, and the raising of *Lazarus*, (which a proper hint wou'd at any time have brought fully to his mind;) and his not *actually* calling them to remembrance, when he was thinking of *Jesus's* other Miracles. The very *Number* and *Variety* of them might help to divert his *Attention* from several of the most distinguish't. If either of *Us* were to write the chief Occurrences of our-own Life for the last ten Years only, it is great odds but we shou'd omit several remarkable Particulars that we sufficiently know. For, tho' we may now have a clear and habitual remembrance of them (or a Power of calling them to mind) when any accident, or train of Ideas, happens to turn our Thoughts that way; yet we might not happen to *recollect* them just at the time when we came to compose our *Memoirs*. We
dayly

daily find that we forget remarkable Things that both our Inclination, and our Interest, shou'd put us in mind of. This is true not only of *moral* Truths, and religious *Considerations*, (which being of an abstracted Nature, are not so easily recollected;) but of the common Incidents and Concerns of Life.

T. When St. *Matthew* related the Story of raising *Jairus's* Daughter, one wou'd think that such resembling Miracles as the Resurrection of *Lazarus*, and of the *Widow's* Son, wou'd, by a natural Connection of Ideas, arise to his view.

N. They probably did so: but he might easily forget them afterwards, when the proper order of time required them to be mention'd. I myself have often forgot things of a pressing Nature, at the proper time when I shou'd have remember'd them: and they were things too that I thought of earnestly, but a few Minutes before; and took all the care I possibly cou'd to keep them in my mind, till the proper opportunity came to do, or mention them. We are continually surrounded with an infinite Variety of Objects that affect us more or less, according to the impresson they make on our Senses or Imagination; and the Attention with which we view and consider them. We sometimes see many Millions of Objects, (or read, hear, and think of ten thousand different things) in one Day: and many of them we can remember for a long time, tho' we forget some of the Circumstances that

SECT. V. attended them. But still the *later* Accidents of Life, when they are important, or interesting, are apt to efface or weaken the impression of *former* Occurrences : and those very Objects, or Facts, that we *now* often reflect on with Attention and Pleasure, will in a very few Years (and perhaps a few Months,) be either quite forgot ; or very seldom and coldly thought of. Now if we apply these general Remarks to St. *Matthew's* Case (who wrote his Gospel several Years after the latest Fact he recorded ;) we may reasonably conclude that he did not happen to think of the Resurrection of *Lazarus*, and several other remarkable Miracles, at the exact and critical time when it was proper to relate them.

T. If the *Evangelists* wrote their Gospels under the Direction and Influence of the *Holy-Spirit*, they cou'd never have been suffer'd to forget such Facts as were the very best Proofs of Christ's divine Mission. The lowest degree of Inspiration that any-one can think of, is, that the Memory of the *Evangelists* was refresh't whenever they happen'd to forget any thing of importance. And since this was not done, we have Reason to conclude that they were not inspired at all : but that they were as subject to *Inattention*, and *Forgetfulness* ; and consequently to *Error* and *Mistake*, as other Historians.

N. I thought we had agreed before that it was not necessary, nor expedient, that each Evangelist shou'd relate *all* the Miracles of *Jesus* ; nor *all the most stupendous* ones.

It

It was sufficient that they were to be recorded by one or other of Them. The Holy-Spirit so far over-ruled and influenced their minds as to preserve them from Error; and from omitting any *necessary* Point of Christian Doctrine: so that in each Gospel we have all that is absolutely necessary to be believed; and as many of the Miracles of *Jesus*, and other important Facts recorded, as are necessary to confirm the Truth of what we believe. According to your Friend's way of Reasoning, no Miracle can be credible that the *first* Evangelist did not record. For, this is the necessary Consequence of his Objection, if it proves any thing at all. But this is in effect to assert that there ought not to have been more than *one* Gospel composed: nay that is impossible there shou'd be more than one *credible* Gospel. For, if all the Discourses and Miracles of *Jesus* ought to have been related by the *first* Evangelist, there cou'd be no room nor pretence for a *second*, or subsequent Evangelist to compose any other Gospels. They cou'd only copy after the *first*; and repeat the same Things that he had written.

M. The *first* Evangelist needed not to have recorded *all* the Miracles, or Discourses of *Jesus*: it wou'd have been sufficient to have related the most *remarkable* of each kind. For instance, if *Matthew* had recorded only the Story of *Lazarus*, whose Resurrection was the greatest Miracle: and *Luke* had added that of the Widow of *Naim's* Son: and *John* lastly

Disc. 5. p.^o

SECT. V.  had reminded us of *Jairus's* Daughter, which the other *Evangelists*, not thro' Ignorance or Forgetfulness, but studying Brevity, had omitted; then all had been well: and no Objection had hence lain against the Credit of any of these Miracles; or against the Testimony of the *Evangelists*.

N. If this had been the Case, you wou'd have told us, that each Evangelist's being *con-*
 Disc. 5. p. 8. *tent with* recording *one instance* of raising the dead, was not a *Reason sufficient* for their neglecting the other two: and that " If
 " each *had made a report of all the three*
 " Instances, no Body wou'd have thought
 " their History of *Christ* overcharg'd with
 " impertinent, and tautological Repetiti-
 " ons". Then the raising of the Widow's Son, or the Ruler's Daughter, wou'd have been magnify'd as a more undoubted, and unexceptionable Miracle, than the Resurrection of *Lazarus*: and you wou'd have urged, that if St. *Matthew* had known any thing of such astonishing unquestionable Miracles, he cou'd not have forgot them. Indeed your Friend's Objection (if it be of any force) holds equally good against the Credibility of any Fact, Miracle, or Point of Doctrine, that St. *Matthew* has not mentioned. But you shou'd consider that if he had not been permitted to forget some important Facts, there cou'd have been no occasion for St. *Mark* and St. *Luke* to supply his Omissions. And if *They* too had not been suffer'd to omit some signal Miracles, and Points of Instruction, there
 wou'd

wou'd have been no room left for St. *John* to compose his Gospel, in order to record some material Things the rest had forgot; and thereby to give a tacit Approbation and Testimony to all that they related. If it was expedient that there shou'd be more Gospels than one; and that the Doctrine and Miracles of *Jesus* shou'd be recorded by *four* different Persons, as I proved sufficiently before; then it will follow, that for these as well as other important Reasons, the divine Spirit wisely permitted not only St. *Matthew*, but St. *Mark*, and St. *Luke* too, to forget the Resurrection of *Lazarus*, and some other signal Miracles; that St. *John* might have occasion to record them in his Gospel; and thereby give his additional Evidence and Testimony to all the Facts, and Truths related by the other Evangelists.

M. I see no Reason why St. *John*'s Story shou'd not be subjected to the same Rules of Criticism that other Historys are. The first Writer of a Hero's Life is supposed to mention all the grand Occurrences of it. And if a third or fourth Biographer after him presume to add a more illustrious Transaction of the Hero's Life; it will be rejected as Fable and Romance; tho' for no other Reason than this, that the first Writer must have been appriz'd of it, and wou'd have inserted it in his History, had there been any Truth in it. Disc. 5. p. 7.

N. When several Historians write the Life of any distinguish't Person, at different Periods of time, they are supposed

SECT. V.  not to be cotemporary; nor to have had the same exact Intelligence of the Facts they relate: and therefore the Authority of the first Writer is generally reckon'd preferable to the Testimony of those who come after: and his Silence as to any remarkable Action or Event they relate afterwards, gives some Cause to suspect, or question, the Truth of it. But this remark is no-way applicable to the Case of the *Evangelists*. For, tho' St. *John* wrote his Gospel several Years after the rest; he was yet cotemporary with them. He was an Eye-witness of the Things he relates: and in his Gospel mentions such Things as the first Christians must have often heard, both from him, and the other Apostles. He shows the same marks of Candour and Veracity that the other Evangelists do: and therefore his Testimony is in all respects equally credible.

M. Tho' we shou'd suppose that St. *Matthew* might happen to forget the Resurrection of *Lazarus*, when he composed his Gospel; it is still more improbable that both St. *Mark* and St. *Luke* shou'd omit it too; if they had ever heard of it.

N. Since St. *Mark* and St. *Luke* were not *Eyewitnesses* of the Things they relate; but had their Information from the Apostles; it was much easyer for *them* to forget some of the remarkable Miracles of *Jesus*, than for St. *Matthew*; who must be supposed to have seen most of them himself: for, the Things we see done affect us more strongly,

strongly, than those we only *hear* of; and are therefore better remember'd. Besides, St. *Mark* saw St. *Peter's* Miracles; and St. *Luke* those of St. *Paul*: and both of them must have heard of many other Wonders wrought by the other Apostles: which must have help't, by degrees, to weaken the impression that the account they had heard of *Christ's* Miracles might at first have made upon their Minds. I do not reject the plausible Reasons that *Grotius*, Dr. *Whitby*, and * others offer, to account for the Silence of *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*, concerning the raising of *Lazarus*. But seeing Forgetfulness or Inattention, even in Things of Importance, is what the most cool and considerate Persons are more or less subject to; and that this is the *only* thing that can account for *all* the different Omissions of important Miracles, and other Facts, that we observe in the Gospels of *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*; I think their *Inadvertency* alone is a satisfactory Answer to the Objection or Argument you draw from their omitting to record the Resurrection of *Lazarus*. All you can pretend is, that it is not *likely* that these three Evangelists shou'd all forget this signal Miracle. But supposing it were *not likely*, (or what one wou'd have expected;) you cannot thence conclude that they cou'd not, (or did not *actually*) forget

* See Mr. *Lardner's* Vindication of our Saviour's Miracles in raising of *Jairus's* Daughter, the Widow of *Naim's* Son, and *Lazarus*, p. 4—31.

SECT. V.



get it: because, far more unlikely Things happen dayly. Nay, our-own Experience, in forgetting Things of Moment that we have but lately seen, or heard, or design'd to do, must convince us that it is probable enough the *Evangelists* might forget some *few* (of a great many) remarkable Things, that were done several Years before they compos'd their Gospels; I mean, *so far* forget them, as not to think of them just at the proper time when the order of the Evangelical History required they shou'd be related. But I need not insist upon the *Probability* of this: every part of St. *John's* Gospel is an evident Proof of it. For, there he has recorded many Things that the other *Evangelists* omitted; not only several Discourses of *Jesus*, but some Miracles and other Facts, that they had forgot. So that we have positive, unquestionable Evidence for the Truth of what you reckon *improbable*.

M. How little regard is to be had to the Testimony of St. *John*, (or rather to the Gospel that passes under his Name,) will afterwards appear when we come to consider the Absurditys in the account it gives us of *Lazarus's* Resurrection. At present I have some other Difficultys to propose concerning the several Storys of the Persons that *Jesus* is said to have rais'd from the Dead. It is natural to inquire what became of them; how long they lived; and of what Use and Advantage their restored Lives were to the Church, or to Mankind. The Evangelical and Ecclesiastical

stical History is quite silent as to these SECT. V. Points : which is enough to make us suspect these Storys to be intirely romantick.

N. Some Objections are so frivolous that one scarce knows how to answer them. No-body but your Friend cou'd imagin that the *Evangelists*, or other antient Writers, shou'd have left us an Account of the After-life or Actions of the three Persons whom *Jesus* raised; supposing they cou'd have done it. You might with as much Reason ask what became of *Nathanael*, *Nicodemus*, *Jairus*, and *Joseph of Arimathea*; who all seem to have become Disciples of *Jesus*. Seeing the Evangelists have left us but very short Narratives of only *some* of *Christ's* own Actions, Discourses, and Miracles; and have said almost nothing of his Life and Conduct (however useful and edifying it was) before he enter'd upon his Ministry; it cou'd not be thought that they wou'd take any Notice of Things so foreign to the design of their Gospels, as the Lives of those Persons whom *Jesus* miraculously cured, or raised from the Dead. The Ecclesiastical History gives us but a very imperfect Account of the Lives and Labours of the *Apostles* themselves. Their Disciples, and other primitive Pastors, who might be qualified for such an undertaking, had something else to imploy them, than the Writing of Lives or Historys, during the terrible Persecutions that the Christian Church then endured. The Memoirs of
the

SECT. V.

the Ecclesiastical Writers in those times had the same fate with the Works of other Authors, and perish't in the common Ruin. But if they had all been preserved, we cou'd not reasonably expect that those primitive Writers wou'd have given us any account of Persons and Things that they cou'd know nothing of, besides what is occasionally mention'd in the Gospels.

Disc. 5. p.
32.

M. It seems none of those whom *Jesus* raised to Life did, or cou'd, after the return of their Souls to their Bodys, tell any Tales of their *separate Existence*: otherwise the *Evangelists* had not been silent in this main Point, which is of the Essence of Christianity.

N. Perhaps those who return'd from a separate State cou'd not remember the *intellectual* Objects, or Scenes of Contemplation, upon which their Thoughts and Attention were imployed. They might only know that they were in a State of Rest and Indolence; somewhat resembling *that* we enjoy in quiet Sleep. Some People pass whole Nights without dreaming. Others dream away the greatest Part of every Day, without remembering at any time what they thought of, the Hour before. The most sedate and recollected Persons, who imploy their thoughts and time to the best purpose, have their waking Dreams, and Reveries, as well as others; tho' not so many of them. And I fancy it wou'd puzzle the wisest Philosopher to tell what he thought of, and how he imploy'd his time, any particular Day or Week of the last Year. But
tho'

tho' he cannot recollect such Particulars of his past Life during any given time ; he is absolutely certain that he existed, and was *conscious*, in those very Portions of time that he can give no Account of. There is as little Reason to expect that those Persons whom *Jesus* rais'd from the Dead, shou'd give any *distinct* Account of what they thought, or perceived, in their separate State. And if they did ; an account of such things cou'd only gratify a fruitless Curiosity. The *Evangelists* had things of far more Importance to relate. In several places the Scriptures assure us not only of a future State, but of the separate Existence of the Soul ; without which a future State is scarce conceivable. *Christ's* telling the penitent Thief that he shou'd that very Day be with him in *Paradise*, is a plain Proof of the Soul's existing in a separate State : otherwise the Souls of *Jesus* and the Penitent, cou'd not have been in that happy State which is meant by *Paradise*. St. *Paul's* desiring to depart out of this World, and to be with *Christ*, which he thought was far better for him than any thing in this World, is a Demonstration that he believed his Soul (that is, he himself) shou'd be with *Christ*, as soon as he departed this Life.

Luk. xxiii.
43.

Phil. i. 23.

M. Can you tell us where the Soul of *Lazarus* was during the four Days of his Burial ? I can't possibly conceive any thing else than that either he was not really dead : or that his Soul dyed with him ; or went to a bad Place : else he had never absconded

Dis. s. p.
34

SECT. V.  ed for fear of the *Jews*, as if he was unwilling to dye again; and return to the Place whence he came.

N. Tho' he might be willing enough to dye again; Duty and Prudence required him to preserve his restored Life till Providence shou'd call him to resign it. By his Death he cou'd only once give a Testimony to his own Resurrection, and thereby to the divine Authority, and Doctrine of *Jesus*: but by prolonging his Life he cou'd more effectually bear the same Testimony; and at last seal it with his Blood, if needful. So that his avoiding the Rage and Violence of the *Jews* was no Proof either of his having been in a bad Place when he dyed; or of his being unwilling to *depart* again to that *far better* State which *St. Paul* wish't for, and yet patiently waited the proper time for his Departure. To suppose that *Lazarus* was not dead, is ridiculously absurd. And to fancy that his Soul dyed with him, is an inconsistent and contradictory Notion. If his Soul had actually dyed, or ceased to be conscious, and active, it cou'd never have been *revived*, even by Omnipotence itself. You may as well talk of recalling or repeating the *same* numerical *Sound*, or any past *Sensation*. Another Soul resembling that which you absurdly supposed to dye, might be produced, or *created*; but it cou'd not be the very *same* individual Soul. Activity, Life, and Consciousness are so *essential* to the Soul, that without these, it is a mere *ens rationis*; a *potentia proxima*, an inconceivable,

ble, useleſs, inſignificant *ſomething*, we SECT. V.
know not what; which Mr. Locke ſome 
where calls a *bare Being*: ſomething that is
a-kin to the Schoolmen's *Ens transcendendale*.
That great Philoſopher fancied that the
Soul (or the *Body* rather, according to him)
loſes all Conſciouſneſs, and Thought, when
it falls aſleep; and has the Power of
thinking *ſuperadded* to it, or reproduced,
the Moment it begins to *awake*. But he
did not conſider that if a wicked diſorder-
ly Soul loſt all Thought, Life, and Con-
ſciouſneſs, (and therewith every vicious *Ha-*
bit) in Sleep; it cou'd not poſſibly be re-
newed, or revived again. For, who ſhou'd
animate and enliven it, by reſtoring to it
that *Conſciouſneſs* which is the Subject and
Principle of Life, Activity, and every Per-
fection? Almighty God cou'd not repro-
duce ſuch *loſt* Conſciouſneſs; without be-
ing the immediate Author of thoſe vicious
Habits, and diſorderly *Inclinations* that are
inſeparable from a wicked Spirit, while it
continues *wicked*. The Soul *itſelf* cannot
be the efficient Cauſe of its *renewed* Con-
ſciouſneſs every Morning: for, till it be-
comes conſcious, it cannot act at all. Nor
is it poſſible to aſſign any other Cauſe that
is able to produce ſuch a glorious Effect
as reſtoring *loſt* Conſciouſneſs dayly; which
is indeed the ſame thing as *creating* a Soul,
or an active conſcious Being. Hence it fol-
lows that the ſame individual continued Con-
ſciouſneſs of Being, cannot poſſibly be *repro-*
duced: therefore, it is never loſt: therefore,
the Soul always thinks: or is always con-
ſcious.

SECT. V.



scious. And the Resurrection of those whom *Jesus* brought again from the Dead, is a Demonstration, even to Sense, that the Soul doth exist *separately* from the Body. So that, in every respect, the perpetual *Life*, and *Immortality* of the Soul is *brought to Light by the Gospel*: and the Demonstrations of this Truth, that we have from Reason and Experience, are confirm'd by unquestionable Facts.

M. I can make nothing of those fine-spun metaphysical Cobwebs that you call Demonstrations of the Soul's Immortality. An *immaterial Substance* is mere Jargon: a negative, inconsistent, unintelligible Notion. I'm sure I have a Body: but no Man can tell whether what you call my *Soul* be any thing else than a *Modification* of my Body; a *Power* resulting from the Motion of Animal-spirits moving in a *fitly-organized System* of Matter.

N. The true and proper Definition of a Spirit is, "an active, rational, conscious, self-determining Being." These are all positive Ideas: and they are as clear and distinct as Consciousness can make them. I am as certain that my *Soul* is not *corporeal*; nor a Power resulting from any *Composition*, or *Motion*, of *Matter*; as I am certain that a Circle is not a Triangle: and that a Scarlet-colour, is not the *Sound* of a Trumpet. The Ideas of *Mind*, and *Matter* are intirely distinct and opposite in their Nature, and Property. No two Things whatever can be more incompatible, and inconsistent, than the subject of solid Extension, which is figured,

gured, divisible, and inert; and the subject of thinking; which is (and must necessarily be) indivisible and self-active. Therefore *Matter*, which, of itself, is inert, figured and divisible, can no more become *conscious* (or have the self-active, indivisible, boundless Power of thinking superadded to it,) than a *Square* can become *round*; a *Storm* grow *angry*; or *Lightning* be *thoughtful*. Now since Consciousness is a self-active indivisible Power; it follows that the subject (or immediate support) of Consciousness, that is, the conscious Being, must be strictly, numerically *one*, simple, and *indivisible*: therefore, it must be *incorruptible*; and therefore, *immortal*; whether it be *extended* or not.

M. What can you mean? It is impossible that the Soul shou'd be *material*; and yet immortal too.

N. You seem to be frighten'd at this Paradox: but it may certainly be true; if by *material*, you mean indivisibly *extended*, or indiscerpibly *expanded*. For, it is not the *extension* of Body, that makes it corruptible; but its being *divisible*. So that if there be any indivisible *Atoms* (which can scarce be doubted) they must be *incorruptible*. And if the Soul were supposed to be indivisibly *extended*, as some *Atoms* may be; it must still be incorruptible; and therefore *immortal*. Infidels therefore can have no well-grounded Hopes of *Annihilation* at Death: since the Soul, whether indiscerpibly *extended*, or not; whether it be supposed to be, in this Sense, *material*, or *immaterial*, must

Q

necessa-

SECT. V. necessarily be *indivisible*; and consequently *incorruptible*, and *immortal*.

T. Gentlemen, you seem now to have quite lost sight of the Subject you were upon. You are got into the very depth of Metaphysicks, while you were arguing about the Credibility of Facts.

N. Mr. W. led me off from the Point before us, by his last Objection; which supposed either that *Lazarus* was not really dead; or that his Soul dyed with him. To show you the Absurdity of this last Supposition (which is one of the fundamental Points of Infidelity,) I was insensibly drawn-in to mention some Proofs of the Soul's Immortality.

T. Such Digressions are sometimes unavoidable in Conversation. I think you have had fewer than I ever observed in so much Discourse. And since those few you fall into are always useful, they are on that account the more excuseable. Indeed I shou'd scarce have interrupted you so soon, but that your Speculations grew too refin'd and abstracted for my Apprehension. I like Notions that are more adapted to common Capacitys; and that the Imagination can lay hold of. You will proceed now Mr. M. with your Objections.

M. I think the Character and Condition of the three Persons whom *Jesus* rais'd to Life, furnish a just Objection against the Truth of these Storys. Where was the Wisdom of chusing those three above others to that Honour? Instead of the obscure Youth of whom we know nothing,

thing, one wou'd think *Jesus* shou'd rather have raised *John* the *Baptist* to Life. A Person of greater Merits, and more worthy of *Christ*'s favour cou'd not be. If he cou'd raise any from the dead, he wou'd surely have raised *him*; and why did he not?

SECT. V.
Disc. 5. p. 25.

N. The *Baptist*'s proper Office was expressly foretold by the Prophet *Malachy*. He was appointed to be the *Fore-runner* of *Christ*, to prepare the way for his coming: not to be his Disciple, or Apostle. He had fully and faithfully discharged this Office; and suffer'd sufficiently. If *Jesus* had raised him to Life, and imployed him in Preaching the Gospel; this wou'd unavoidably have subjected him to a second Martyrdom. And Infidels wou'd then have said, that "it was hardly a good work in *Jesus* to recall [the *Baptist*'s] Soul from Happiness, to the Miserys and Troubles of this wicked World;" of which he endured so large a share before.

Ch. iii. 1.
& iv. 5.

Disc. 5. p. 34.

M. But why were those three whom *Jesus* raised, or any of them, prefer'd to other Persons of a different Age and Condition in the World? *Fairus*'s Daughter was an insignificant Girl, of twelve Years old. Perhaps the Widow's Son was not older: and his Life was of no more Importance to the World after, than before, his Resurrection. And tho' *Lazarus* was *Jesus*'s Friend; yet many fitter Persons might have been chosen for the Manifestation of his Wisdom and Goodness, and the Conversion of Unbelievers. Instead of a Boy, and a Girl, and even of *Lazarus*, who

Disc. 5. p. 21.

Ibid. p. 24.

SECT. V.

were all of no consequence to the Publick either before, or after; I shou'd think *Jesus* ought to have raised an useful Magistrate, whose Life had been a common Blessing; an industrious Merchant, whose Death was a publick Loss; a Father of a numerous Family, which depended on him for a comfortable Subsistence. The raising such Persons wou'd have procured *Jesus* the Applause as well as the Wonder of the World.

N. The little worldly Advantages that might accrue to the Friends or Acquaintance of the deceased, were but accidental Circumstances attending the Miracles that *Jesus* wrought in raising the dead. In chusing proper Persons, he may justly be supposed to have had a view rather to their Probity, and good Dispositions, than to their outward Condition and Rank in Life: there being often as worthy Persons in obscure and private Stations, as in the highest. And we may reasonably conclude, that the main design of these Miracles was better answer'd by raising those three Persons he chose, than it cou'd have been by raising any other. Two of them were so far from being obscure *insignificant* Persons, that they were perhaps the very fittest he cou'd have pitch't on. And the third, (I mean the Widow's Son) might be so too. He was probably a hopeful Lad, distinguish't by his good Qualitys, and promising Dispositions, more than by his outward Circumstances: and more likely to become a *publick Blessing*, than some rich

Mer-

Merchant, who might at once promote SECT. V.
 Trade and Wickedness with great Industry. 
 But whoever he was, perhaps the publick
 occasion, and vast number of Witnesses
 then present, might (among other Reasons)
 determin *Jesus* to raise this Youth. Be-
 sides the great Company that attended the Luk. vii.
 Funeral; *Jesus* had *many of his Disciples* 12.
 (or frequent Hearers) *with him*; and *much* Ver. 11.
People. So that a more proper occasion for See Luk. vi.
 exerting his divine and beneficent Power 17. 8c
 cou'd not have offer'd. Had he only en- Ch. xix. 37.
 deavoured to comfort the afflicted Mother
 with a *Discourse on the Pleasures of Abra-*
ham's Bosom, where she might soon hope to
meet her Son; you wou'd have told us
 that this was but an artful way of con-
 cealing his want of Power to raise the de-
 ceased: and that on such a *solemn* occa-
 sion, before such *Crouds* of Witnesses,
 such a fair opportunity presenting itself; at
 an *accidental* meeting of the Corpse, where
 there cou'd be no possible Suspicion of
 Fraud, or Collusion; it was much fitter
 for a divine Prophet and Worker of Mi-
 racles to revive at once a disconsolate
 Widow, and her dead Son, than merely
 to give her a cold Lecture upon Patience,
 and Resignation. *This* (you might justly
 have said) must have been an unexcepti-
 onable Miracle: and you wou'd have ha-
 rangued upon the Necessity and great Ad-
 vantages of it. But because this was real-
 ly the Case, the Miracle, however stu-
 pendous, is now depretiated, and represent-
 ed as needless and improper. So difficult

SECT. V.  is it, and indeed impossible, to prevent cavilling and frivolous Objections. But to proceed: *Jairus* was a Man of Note and Distinction, and a Ruler of the Synagogue: and the raising his Daughter to Life, was the same thing as raising himself. *His* Life might depend on her's: and her Resurrection might tend as effectually to convince him and others of *Christ's* divine Authority, as if he himself had been raised. Besides he had apply'd himself to *Jesus* with the greatest Respect and Earnestness: so that in this case *Jesus* had no Choice; seeing he never rejected any Person that came to him for relief. As for *Lazarus*, you cannot doubt of his being a proper Person to be rais'd. He was a particular *Friend* whom *Jesus* loved: and for that Reason we may conclude he was a worthy good Man. And he was so far from being *obscure*, that he seems to have been a Person of Figure and great Wealth. For besides the hospitable and friendly Reception he gave to *Jesus* and his Disciples who went often to *Bethany*; we find his Sister *Mary*, who lived with him, poured a Box of precious Ointment upon *Jesus*, (as a mark of her Respect,) that was worth * nine Pounds. Besides; he lived near *Jerusalem*, and had || many Friends there; who came to condole with his Sisters upon his Death: and they, happening to be Witnesses to his Resurrection, were thereby induced to believe in *Jesus*. The Ruler's Daughter, and the Widow's Son were both *Young* indeed; but that is so far from

* See Mar.
xiv. 3, 5.
| Joh. xi.
31. 45.

from rendering them *insignificant*, or improper to be raised; that for this very Reason, they were not only more proper than old Persons, but fitter too (all other Circumstances being supposed equal) than the middle-aged, to be raised to Life: because according to the Course of Nature they were likely to continue longer in the World, to be the living and lasting Monuments of *Christ's* divine Power and Beneficence. So that, in every respect, the three Persons whom he raised, seem to have been as fit as any he cou'd have chosen.

M. Whatever they were, none of them had been long enough dead to convince us of *Jesus's* miraculous Power in raising them. *Fairus's* Daughter was but newly expired, if at all dead, when *Jesus* brought her to Life again. *Jesus* himself said she was only *asleep*. And it is not impossible but the passionate screams of the by-standers might fright her into Fits that bore the appearance of Death: why else did *Jesus* turn these inordinate weepers out of the House, before he cou'd bring her to her Senses again? And why did he tell her Parents she was only *asleep*, but to comfort them with the possibility of his awaking her out of it? Is not this destructive of the Miracle; and making no more of it than what another Man might do?

N. Unless we knew how far *Fairus's* House was from the Place where he found

SECT. V. *Jesus*, we cannot determin *how long* his Daughter had been dead, when she was brought to Life again. She probably dyed some Hours at least, before *Jesus* came to her; and perhaps the Day before. Her Death had no Appearance of Fits, or Swooning: but must have come upon her by Degrees, after a languishing Sicknefs. Her Father expected her Death when he left her: for he told *Jesus* that she then *lay a dying*, when he begg'd Him to come and heal her. The Noise, Weeping and Tumult that the by-standers made, were *occasion'd* by her certain Death: but cou'd not possibly be the *Cause* of it. The Room they were in was probably too close; and the Air too gross and thick for the Girl to breathe freely in, after she was brought to Life: and for that reason *Jesus* might remove the Croud of officious Mourners. In * Scripture Death is so often called Sleep, that nothing can be inferr'd from *Jesus's* saying the Girl slept. Stephen is said to *fall asleep* when he was stoned. * Ch. vii. 21. And * *Job* and || *Daniel* call Death a *sleeping* in the Dust. Ch. xii. 2.

T. But in the present case *Jesus* opposes *Sleep* to *Death*: for he said, *she is not dead, but sleepeth*: which is the same as saying that she was not *really* but *seemingly* dead.

N. He said the same of *Lazarus* in effect: that his *Sicknefs* was *not unto Death*: that he *slept*; and that he wou'd go and
awake

* See 1 Cor. xv. 6, 10, 1 Thes. iv. 13, 15.

awake him out of sleep. But he explain'd his meaning afterward: and the Sequel of the Story shows that *Lazarus* was certainly dead. In both Cases, *Jesus* meant the same thing: that *Lazarus* and the Ruler's Daughter were not *finally* dead, as others are; so that they cou'd not be brought to Life till the general Resurrection: but that tho', for the time, they were truly dead; he wou'd as easily and certainly restore them to Life again, as he cou'd *awake* one that was only asleep. When he told those that mourn'd over the Ruler's Daughter, that she was not dead, but asleep; they *laught* at him with *scorn*; *knowing* (or being *sure*) that *she was* truly dead. And they might know it as certainly as any thing else that is the Object of Sense. For, tho' ignorant and unexperienced People, who have not seen many dye, might possibly think one dead who is still alive: yet the common effects and natural signs of Death are as evident and visible as other familiar Things are. And tho' it may sometimes seem doubtful for a Minute or two, whether a dying Person has actually *expired*, or not; the doubt is soon removed: and those who have the right use of their Senses, are soon convinced that the *Body* they see lying before them, has none at all.

M. It is probable that the Name of *Fairus* is only fictitious: and that there was no such Person among the *Jews*: because it is plainly intimated in the Gospels that
 none

SECT. V. none of the Rulers of the Synagogues
 confessedly believed in *Jesus*.

N. The *Evangelists* do not say that *Jairus* confessedly believed in *Jesus*. He might at first look upon *Christ* as a great Prophet who wrought many Miracles, and wonderful Cures; without believing him to be the *Messiah*. This was the very Conclusion that the Multitude naturally drew from his raising the Widow's Son: they glorify'd God, saying, that *a great Prophet was risen up among them*: and that God had visited his People. But perhaps *Jairus*, after the raising of his Daughter to Life, was thorowly convinced of *Christ's* divine Authority; and became his Disciple. There is nothing in this Supposition inconsistent with any thing that St. *John* says. The chief Priests and *Pharisees* to overawe the People, ask't them if any of the Rulers or of the *Pharisees* believed in *Jesus*: which intimates that they knew of none of their Leading-men that believed in him: or rather that they pretended, not to know of any. But the same *Evangelist* assures us, that even among the chief-Rulers many believed on *Jesus*; tho', for fear of the *Pharisees*, they did not confess him openly, lest they shou'd have been excommunicated.

M. If this Story of raising *Jairus's* Daughter were literally true; and *Jesus* was going to work such a Miracle, he shou'd not have call'd her Death, *sleep*: but if others had thought her only in a swoon, he shou'd first have convinced them that she was

was certainly dead before he did the great work upon her. SECT. V.

N. You must own that his calling her Death only *sleep*, look't very honest and undesigning. He seemed to have had no view of magnifying his wonderful Power; or of spreading his Fame. If the Girl had been only in a swoon, or a lethargick State, a Deceiver wou'd have endeavour'd to convince the by-standers that she was really dead. But *Jesus* was so far from any Fraud, that he used an Expression which might have led them into a quite contrary mistake, if they had not *known*, that she was certainly dead.

M. But why did *Jesus* turn the People out of the *House* before he wou'd raise her? Disc. 5. p. 37.
The more Witnesses are present at a Miracle, the better it is attested; and the more readily believ'd by others. And who shou'd be present at the Miracle rather than those who disbelieved the divine Power of *Jesus*?

N. He did not turn them out of the *House*, but only out of the *Room* where the Corpse lay. It is said indeed that *when the People were put forth, he went in*. But it plainly appears that they were only put out of the *Room*. For, tho' he was already *come into the House*, and saw the Ministers, and the People making a Noise, bewailing the Deceased; yet in the next Verse it is said, that he *went in*, and took her by the Hand: and St. *Mark* tells us that after *Jesus* was *come into the House*, and saw the Tumult; he put them all out; Mat. ix. 25. Ver. 23. Ch. v. 38.
and

SECT. V. and then *enter'd in where the Damsel*
 *was lying.* Those, therefore, who were
 put out of the Chamber where the Corpse
 lay, wou'd no doubt stay in the outer-room;
 Luk.viii.54. and might hear *Jesus* bid the *Maid arise.*
 And if they cou'd all have stayed in the
 Room, only a very few of them cou'd
 have seen *Jesus* take her by the Hand.
 Without seeing this, they were still Witnesses
 to the Miracle. They saw her *dead* be-
 fore they left the Room: and they saw
 her alive and well, when they came in a-
 gain. Now this was sufficient to convince
 them of her being raised from the dead;
 whether they heard *Jesus* bid her *arise,*
 or not. The Circumstance of his taking
 her by the Hand, and bidding her *arise,*
 was of no importance. Her being brought
 from Death, to Life, was the *miraculous*
 Event; which they were as sure of as their
 Senses cou'd make them.

M. They were no more Eye-witnesses
 to the Miracle, than if they had not been
 in the House. It wou'd certainly have
 been a greater Satisfaction to them to have
 seen *Jesus* take her by the Hand; and pro-
 nounce those *wonderful* Words, *Talitha cu-*
mi! The Miracle wou'd have been the more
 publick and unexceptionable: and it is im-
 possible to give any good Reason for put-
 ting them out.

N. Since they saw her both *dead,* and after
Jesus's being with her, *alive* again, they were
 truly Witnesses to the Miracle; tho' not to
 every little Circumstance that attended it;
 nor in such a strict Sense as the Father
 and Mother were, and the three Disciples
 who

who were with *Jesus*. As for the putting the Croud out of the Room, it is easy to account for it. Common decency seem'd to require it; and the Respect that was due to *Jesus*. However that might not be all. He wou'd probably have dispensed with Ceremony, if it cou'd have been done. But the Chamber might be so crouded, that there was no Room for *Jesus* and those who were with him. Therefore when he came in, and saw the Croud and Tumult of People, he said, *give Place*; and order'd them all to be put out. The Room probably was but small; or at least so crouded, that till the People came out, *Jesus*, and the other five that were with him cou'd not easily go in. And if only *some* of the People had been desired to remove; they wou'd never have agreed which of them shou'd stay. Besides, as I observed before, the Room might be so close, that the very breath of a Croud, who had been there some time, might help to make the Air in the Chamber too gross to breathe freely in; as I myself have sometimes experienced in visiting the Sick: so that for his own ease, as well as the safety of the Girl whom he was going to bring to Life (and who must at first need the purest and freshest Air;) he chose to clear the Room of the noisy Croud that fill'd it. And if he open'd the Window to let in fresh Air, when he order'd her Parents to give her Food; he only show'd a prudent concern for her safety: and let them know that the Life he had miraculously restored, was now to be pre-

Matt. ix. 24.

SECT. V. preserved by the proper use of natural means.

M. *Jesus* seems to. have been afraid lest this Miracle shou'd be known: for he charged the Parents not to speak of it. If he meant it as a Testimony of his divine Power, he shou'd rather have exhorted them in Justice to himself to publish it, and make it well known.

Disc. 5. p.
37.

N. A thing may be said, or done, with several views: (as it seems to have happen'd in the present Case:) but the various motives of acting depend so much upon the variety of concurring Circumstances the Agent may be placed in; that without an exact Knowledge of all those different Circumstances; it is impossible to determin what was the chief Motive, or principal View of any singular Action, or Expression. However, several Reasons may be assign'd for *Jesus's* charging *Fairus* and his Wife not to publish the Miracle. He might do it to set his Disciples an Example of Humility; and to caution them against Vain-glory, and making an ostentatious show of their Power, or good Works. He sought not *his-own Glory*; but the Glory of the Almighty *who sent him* into the World. And seeing this Miracle happen'd to be private, he was desirous it might not be publish't too soon, nor too eagerly. He cou'd not possibly expect nor desire that this Miracle (nor others, in which he enjoyn'd Silence to the Partys, or the Witnesses concern'd) shou'd be kept intirely secret, and never be spoken of:

Joh. viii.
50.
Ch. vii. 18.

of: (for this wou'd have defeated the chief Design of his Miracles : and in most Cases such Secrecy was impracticable :) he only desired that the report of them should not be *industriously* spread abroad for a while : he wou'd not have had People so eager, zealous, and active as he often found them in publishing his good and wonderful Works. Many Inconveniencys had happen'd to attend this officious Zeal. When the *Leper*, contrary to *Christ's* order, publish't his Cure, and blazed it abroad every-where, *Jesus* cou'd no longer openly enter into any Town ; but lived retired for a while in desert Places. For he was so continually harass't and beset by the Multitudes who followed him, that He and his Disciples had not *leisure* sometimes to eat. But this was not all. His Life was likewise endanger'd, by having his Miracles too much talk't of ; and by his doing them too publickly. Thus when in the Synagogue, on a Sabbath-Day he cured a Man that had a wither'd Hand, the enraged *Pharisees* went out and consulted how *they might destroy him*. Upon this he withdrew from that place : and when he heal'd many sick Persons, he *straitly charg'd them not to make him known*. By thus ordering some of his Miracles to be conceal'd for a while, he avoided exasperating his implacable Enemys till the proper time for his Death drew near. His Miracles generally were so publick, that he was sure they cou'd not possibly be long kept secret. No ill Consequēces cou'd attend the concealing some of them for a while :
and

SECT.V.

Mark i. 45.

Ch. iii. 20.

Ch. vi. 31.

Luk. vi. 11.

Mar. iii. 6.

Ver. 10, 12.

SECT. V. and it was likely to produce several good Effects. This was a sufficient Reason for his ordering some of the Miracles he wrought in the beginning of his Ministry to be conceal'd as much as they cou'd be. In the last Year of his Life he used none of this Caution. He preach't his Doctrine, and wrought his Miracles, in the most publick manner; in *Jerusalem* itself, and other noted Citys; before great Multitudes; and sometimes in the Presence of the *Pharisees* and Rulers, his watchful inveterate Enemys: which show'd that it was not the fear of Death, but necessary Prudence, that made him so cautious before.

M. His raising the Widow's Son was a greater Miracle, than this, more publick, and more likely to exasperate the *Pharisees*: so that the Apprehension of that, cou'd not be the Reason why *Jesus* desired to have the raising of *Fairus's* Daughter conceal'd.

N. When *Jesus* rais'd her to Life, no doubt he took that favourable Opportunity to make his Character and Office known to *Fairus*; who must already have entertain'd a good Opinion of him. He must have let the Ruler know that *He* was the *Messiah* foretold by the Prophets; and that, thro' Faith in him, sincere Persons of all Nations were now admitted to the Benefit of Repentance, and the Forgiveness of Sins. Whether *Fairus* became a Disciple of *Jesus*, does not certainly appear: but it is most probable that he did. Now since he was Ruler of a Synagogue; and might



might have a Correspondence with the Chief-Priests and Rulers in *Jerusalem*; *Jesus* perhaps caution'd him against publishing the Miracle of his Daughter's being rais'd, to prevent his sending any account of it to *Jerusalem*; lest that shou'd have enrag'd the chief *Rulers* and *Pharisees* there; and rais'd a Storm of Persecution, not against *Jesus* only, but against *Jairus* himself; who, because of his applying himself to *Jesus* in the very humble, earnest, and publick manner he did, to have his Daughter cured, wou'd have been suspected of being a Disciple of *Jesus*; and perhaps have fallen a Sacrifice to the Malice of the *Pharisees*. If *Jairus* was really converted (as seems most likely) *Jesus* might easily foresee that his Faith and Courage cou'd not have been strong enough to stand out against such a severe Tryal: and therefore to prevent it, he charg'd *Jairus* to conceal the Miracle as much as might be. In few Words, this Caution was an example of great Humility: and it might be not only an Act of Prudence with regard to his-own Preservation; but an Instance of Friendship and Kindness to *Jairus*, and his Family.

M. It is plain that neither *Jairus*'s Daughter, nor the Widow's Son had been long enough dead, to give People a sufficient Assurance that there was no mistake in the Case. History, and common Fame, afford Instances of Persons who sometimes have been unfortunately bury'd alive; and at other times happily by one means or other

Disc. 5. p. 28.

R

restored

SECT. V. restored to Life: and who knows but *Jesus* upon some Information or other might suspect the Widow's Son to be in a lethargick State, and had a mind to try if by chafing, &c, he cou'd not bring him to his Senses again.

N. Tho' once in an Age or two, a Person may happen to be bury'd too soon, by some unaccountable Mistake, or the indecent haste of interested Relations; yet the certain Tokens of Death are as plain and evident as any thing else. And we may be sure that a fond Mother wou'd delay the Funeral of her *only Son* as long as she cou'd; so as to prevent all Possibility of his being bury'd alive. But supposing that, notwithstanding all her Fondness and Caution, there was still a *Possibility* of a Mistake as to his Death; this cannot be a sufficient Reason for questioning the Truth of the Miracle that *Jesus* wrought in bringing him to Life. He was certainly believed to be Dead, both by his Mother, and all her Friends: and all the sure and common Tokens of Death must have been perceived, before they carry'd him forth to be bury'd. *Jesus*, coming from a neighbouring City, happen'd to meet the Corpse near the Gate of the Town. He cou'd have no manner of Reason to suspect there was any Mistake as to the Lad's Death: but must have supposed it to be as certain, as others did. And yet he ventured to stop the Funeral; and pretended to raise the dead Body to Life, by only bidding him *rise*. Can you think now that one who had obtain'd the Reputation of being a *great Prophet*,

Prophet, by working Miracles, wou'd run the hazard of losing it at once by attempting to raise a dead Person to Life, if he had not been able to do it; but must have depended upon a mere Conjecture, or Suspicion, that the Person was only in a lethargick State, out of which he might possibly be roused? A deceiver cou'd not but know that the odds against such an Accident was at least ten Millions to one. Nothing therefore but the utmost certainty, (I mean, the Consciousness) of his being endued with a divine Power, cou'd have made *Jesus* attempt to raise the dead Lad. And he did it in such a manner as showed that he was Lord of Life and Death. He only touch't the *Bier*, (as he used to touch any sick or distress't Person he miraculously heal'd,) and said, *Young Man, I say unto thee, arise*: and immediately he that was dead sat up and began to speak.

M. Since some who were actually bury'd, have yet afterwards come to Life without any Miracle; how do we know but that this might have been the Case of the Widow's Son. Tho' *Jesus* was so lucky as to meet the Funeral just at the critical Time when the Lad was coming to the use of his Senses; this does not prove that *Jesus* brought him to Life. When he touch't the *Bier* he might at the same time take the Boy by the Hand, and feel his Pulse: and perceiving him to be alive, he might without any fear of a Disappointment bid the young Man arise; and so pretend to raise him to Life miraculously.

SECT. V.



N. While we are inquiring whether this Action was *miraculous*; the Fact it self, and the Circumstances with which it is related, must, at present, be supposed to be true. The Credibility of the Evangelist's Testimony shall afterwards be proved. And if the Truth of the Fact be admitted; I think there can be no doubt of its being an immediate Effect of the divine Power. For, *Jesus* used no sort of Means whatever. He was so far from *chafing* the *Corpse*, that he did not so much as touch it. He only touch't the *Bier*; and bade the dead Youth *arise*: upon which he immediately sat up, and began to speak. This struck all the Spectators with Fear and Astonishment: so that they *glorify'd God*; and said, *a great Prophet is risen up among us*. The Influence that this Action had upon the numerous Witnesses of it, shows that it was undoubtedly miraculous: and that *Jesus* used no kind of Means in reviving the Boy; but did just what the Evangelist has related, and no more. *Before* he touch't the Bier, he first comforted the sorrowful Mother, forbidding her to weep: which plainly intimated that he was *already* determin'd to remove the Cause of her Grief, by reviving her dead Son. Then, in a moment, he called him into Life. There is no way of accounting for the Truth of this Fact, without allowing it to be effected by a supernatural Power. To suppose that it was attended with Circumstances different from those *St. Luke* has mention'd, is not *accounting* for the Fact, but *denying* the Truth of it. The

Addition

Addition or Alteration of one *important* SECT. V.
 Circumstance quite change's the Nature, 
 and Appearance of an Action. You cannot
 therefore think it a fair way of Reasoning
 against the Credibility of the Facts recorded
 in the Gospels, to argue, not from the Na-
 ture and Circumstances of such Facts, as
 they are there represented, but from other
possible Circumstances, and arbitrary *Supposi-*
tions, that have no Shadow of Reason or
 Evidence to support them. However let us
 view the Case before us according to *your*
 way of solving it; and see whether it has
 the least shew of Probability. Supposing
 then the Lad had been only in a Swoon, or
 Lethargy; is it credible that he shou'd not
 be roused out of it by all the Noise of the
 Minstrels, and Mourning that the *Jews* used
 over their dead; and the loud Lamentations
 of his Mother, and other Friends: nor by
 the various Motions of his whole Body,
 while it was wash't, swath'd, and wrapt up
 in burying Cloaths, and put into the Coffin?
 Cou'd he be in so deep a Lethargy as not to
 be roused into Sense and Motion by all these
 Things; and yet be instantly revived, in a
 natural Way, only by *Jesus's* bidding him
arise? If he was alive before *Jesus* met him,
 why did he not *sit-up* too and *speak*; or at
 least struggle, and give some plain Signs of
 Life, before the Moment that *Jesus* spake
 to him. If he had moved *before*; some or
 other of the Bearers, or of the numerous At-
 tendants, must have perceived, or heard
 it: and then they wou'd have carry'd him
 home again. Besides; what cou'd possibly

SECT. V.  lead *Jesus* to suspect that the Lad was only in a lethargick State? Or to imagin that such an obstinate Lethargy as intirely resembled Death, in all its Appearances, shou'd happen to be just over, at that *critical Moment* when *he* met the Corpse? Cou'd he have any manner of Reason to think that the Lad was not only beginning to revive; but, at that very instant, had the free use of his Senses; and was able not only to *speak*, but to *rise* up, as soon as he was called on? Such strange incredible Suppositions as these cou'd never enter into the Mind of a cautious and considerate Person; who must be supposed to have a due regard to his Credit; and not to hazard it unnecessarily, by a *voluntary* Experiment, in which a *Deceiver* cou'd not have the least hope of Success. Without doubt, raising the Dead is one of the last things he wou'd attempt. Ineed not argue this Point any farther. In whatever Light we view this wonderful Fact, it must at last be resolved into the Divine Power. For, if we shou'd suppose that this Boy, and the Ruler's Daughter had been only in a lethargick State (which there is not the least Reason to imagin,) there wou'd still have been an unquestionable Miracle in their *Cure*; tho' it wou'd not have been quite so astonishing as raising them from the dead. For such a lethargick State as had all the appearances of *Death* attending it, must have been the effect of some dangerous Distemper. And since *Jesus* must not only have rais'd them out of that State, but in a moment have intirely freed them from the Disease

Disease that occasion'd it, without the use of any means; this I say must have been a Miracle as real, though not so astonishing, as his raising them from the dead; and equally a proof of his acting by a divine Power and Commission. SECT. V.

M. If there was no mistake in the Case, might not a piece of Fraud be here concerted between *Jesus*, a subtle Youth and his Mother, and others; and all the Formalitys of a *Death* and Burial be contrived; that *Jesus* whose fame for a worker of Miracles was to be spread, might here have an opportunity of working a grand one. The mourning of the Widow who had her Tears at command, and *Jesus*'s casual meeting of the Corpse upon the Road, looks like a contrivance to put the better face upon the Matter. Disc. 5. p. 28.

N. There does not seem to have been so much as the possibility of any Fraud in this Case. *Jesus* was coming from *Capernaum*, which was several Miles distant from *Nain*. We find he was at *Capernaum* the Day before; where he heal'd the *Centurion*'s Servant at the Point of Death, without so much as seeing him. It does not appear that *Jesus* was ever at *Nain* before. As he drew near to the Gate of the City, he accidentally met a Corpse that was carryed out to be bury'd; and was mov'd with Compassion towards a sorrowful Widow bewailing the Death of her only Son. What cou'd possibly be more natural than this? Or what opportunity more proper for *Jesus* to show his Goodness, Compassion, Luk. vii. 11.
Compare Ver. 1, & 11.
Ver. 2.

SECT. V. and divine Power, than before such Multitudes of People? With a word he actually raised the dead Boy to Life; and
 Luk. vii. 15. *delivered him to his Mother*: by which perhaps *her* Life too was preserved. But rather than believe such an unquestionable Miracle, you will believe the most incredible Things that can be devysed. If you suppose any Fraud in the Miracles of *Jesus*, you meet with *real* Absurditys, Incredibilitys and Inconsistencys in every light you can view your Scheme of Imposture. For, you must not only suppose that an illiterate Carpenter devysed a rational, consistent, perfect Scheme of Religion and Morality, far preferable to any that the wisest heathen Philosophers ever taught: but likewise that without being endued with a divine Power, he yet made his Followers believe that he really wrought the most astonishing Miracles; and perswaded the Sick, the Lame, the Dropical, and Paralytick, that he made them in a moment healthy, sound, and strong:—that tho' he cou'd not work one real Miracle, or give any convincing proof of his acting by divine Authority; he yet prevailed with superstitious Bigots (who were inveterately prejudiced against him and his Doctrine, and tenaciously fond of the Notions and Practices in which they were educated,) to embrace a System of very sublime Truths, and moral Precepts; which, in several Instances, were as contrary to their former Notions and Usages, as Light is to Darknes. You must suppose, that while
 he

he was spreading his Fame and his Doctrine, by endeavouring to pass for a divine Prophet, and a true worker of Miracles; he freely discover'd his secret Frauds and wicked Contrivances, not only to his chosen Disciples, but to many others too, who must have had the strongest Prejudices against him and his Doctrine; and cou'd not regard or value him on any account, but as a *true* Prophet, and a real worker of Miracles. You must suppose that a subtle deceiver who had watchful Enemys in every place, communicated his wicked designs to *strangers*; and cou'd perswade them to joyn with him in notorious Frauds to impose upon the World; tho' he and his Confederates were sure they must, according to the *Jewish* Law, have been put to Death, or severely punish't, if any of their Plots were detected:—and that *many* such Confederates were so foolishly wicked as to hazard their Life and Reputation, against their Interest, and their Inclinations; without any prospect of Advantage, Safety or Pleasure; merely to favour an infamous contemptible Cheat; and to promote the belief of what they knew to be false. Nay, in the present Case you must suppose that he who was so subtle and artful as to deceive and infatuate all he conversed with; was at the same time so very weak and foolish as to trust some of his chief Secrets with Women and Children:—that he found means to prevail with the Widow of *Nain's* Son, (who seems to have been but an artless, simple, unexperienced *Boy*,) to counterfeit

SECT. V.  terfeit Sickness and Death, (tho' it was impossible to be done without a discovery;) and to hazard his Life by the most difficult and dangerous Experiment in the World; and all this for *nothing*: merely to promote such Falshood and Wickedness as all Men naturally abhor. If such a shocking Proposal had actually been made to the Woman and her poor Boy; with what distrust and dread must it have been offer'd! with what Amazement and Horror wou'd it have been received! You cannot seriously believe that any Project so thorowly foolish, wicked, and impracticable ever enter'd into the mind of any Mortal. The whole Scheme appears monstrously absurd at first view: and no Man in his Senses cou'd either contrive it; or think it possible to be effected. And yet sagacious penetrating Infidels can think such an absurd Scheme as this more credible than any Miracle recorded in the Gospels. What I have said on this head is equally applicable to your Supposition of Fraud in the Resurrection of *Lazarus*.

Disc. 5. p.
29.

M. His case seems to be the least exceptionable of the three. He had been bury'd four Days, and was supposed by his Sister to be putrify'd: and if so; the raising him to Life was an indisputable Miracle. But whether he who was *Jesus's* Friend, and beloved Disciple, wou'd not come into Measures with his Lord, for the defence of his Honour, and propagating his Fame, Infidels, who *take Christianity for an Imposture*, will not question.

N. This

N. This is your *πρώτον Ψεύδος*; which your Friend shou'd not have blab'd out so rashly. Infidels *take Christianity* to be an *Imposture*: so that it is impossible they shou'd inquire impartially into the Truth and Merits of the Cause. Without a candid and previous Examination, they rashly conclude that all *Christ's* Miracles were juggling Tricks and Frauds: and that his Disciples were Cheats. These are some of the first Principles, or *Postulata*, of Unbelievers. And upon this Foundation they form their Plan of Infidelity. You cavil at the Circumstances of Facts: You raise Difficultys and Objections: and instead of striking out any new Light; or yielding to the force of the utmost Evidence; you study only how to perplex, and darken the plainest Truths. But if you really had that regard to Truth and just reasoning which you pretend to, you shou'd first prove that *Jesus* and his Apostles were guilty of some plain Fraud, in one Instance at least: and thence infer that they might possibly deceive the World in other Cases. But instead of this fair procedure, you think (or *take it for granted*,) that an Imposture was *possible* in some Cases: and thence you gravely conclude that there was *actually* nothing but Deceit and Collusion in all the Miracles that *Jesus* wrought. This is a plain begging of the Question: such a gross Fallacy as one wou'd not think those cou'd fall into, who value themselves so much upon their Acuteness and Penetration. There are so many, and such

SECT. V.



such manifest Absurditys in this Supposition of Fraud, that the most credulous unthinking *Deist* can scarce digest them. I mention'd some few of them in the Case of raising the Widow's Son. And the very same Contradictions and Absurditys attend the Supposition of an Imposture in the raising of *Lazarus*. He was a Friend and Disciple of *Jesus* indeed: but what made him so? At first he must have labour'd under the same Prejudices against *Jesus*, and his Doctrine, that other *Jews* had: and no thing cou'd have removed those Prejudices, and reconciled him to *Jesus*, but the utmost Conviction, that he was a divine Prophet, the *Messiah*, or the Son of God. *Lazarus* cou'd not love nor value one whom he knew to be an Impostor. Far less wou'd he have hazarded his own Life, merely to promote the honour of such a wicked worthless Person as he must have reckon'd *Jesus*, if he had proposed to *Lazarus* the vilest Imposture. But how can you think it possible such a Cheat cou'd be carry'd on? Mortal Sickness cannot be counterfeited. The very attempt to do it for a few Days must make it *real*. Artful People may assume any living Aire they please: but they cannot put on the pale ghastly form of Death; nor feign the *facies Hippocratica*. *Lazarus* was a Man of Note. He had many Friends at *Jerusalem*, which was but two Miles from his House. Some of those many *Jews* who came to condole with his Sisters upon his Death, and several of his Acquaintance and Neighbours in *Bethany*, must certainly

certainly have visited him in his Sickness. SECT. V.
 And if it had been only *feigned*; some or 
 other of them must have found it out.
 His Physicians must certainly have known
 it: and so must those who *wash't* the pre- See Acts ix.
37.
 tended Corpse, and wrapt it up. When
 his Death was heard of, not only some of
 his Friends from *Jerusalem*, but his Neigh-
 bours must according to the *Jewish* Custom,
 have come to comfort his Sisters, and to
 lament and bewail with them over their
 deceased Brother. These Friends and
 Neighbours cou'd not avoid looking upon
 the Corpse: Custom and Curiosity must
 have led them to it. So that if there had
 been any Cheat in the Case, it must una-
 voidably have been discover'd. Such a Se-
 cret must have been communicated to so
 many Persons: and there were so many
 probable Accidents that might help to dis-
 cover it, that it was morally impossible
 that any who had common-sense shou'd
 attempt it, or hope to succeed in it. They
 cou'd see nothing but the grossest Folly,
 Wickedness, and Impossibility in the Plot;
 and Hazard, Ruin, Disgrace, and *real* Death,
 in the certain Discovery of it. But if such
 a Plot cou'd have appear'd feasible, and
 have been actually laid; *Jesus* wou'd cer-
 tainly have been at Hand to direct and
 conduct it. If he had not liked to be at
 his Friend *Lazarus's* House, he wou'd have
 been either in *Bethany*, or very near to it,
 for the easier, surer, and quicker convey-
 ing of Intelligence: and wou'd not have
 left such a very hazardous difficult Scheme
 (which

SECT. V. (which a thousand Accidents might have cross't, retarded, or disappointed) to the mannagement of others. Yet thus it happen'd. He was so far from being near *Bethany*, that he was not in *Judea*; but at *Bethabara* beyond *Jordan*, about fifty Miles off.

Joh. x. 40.
Ch. i. 28.

T. However distant *Jesus* was from *Bethany*; and tho' he had retired with privacy for fear of the *Jews*, we find his *Friends* knew where he was: and that the *Sisters* sent him Intelligence when the Plot began to work. He and they had probably concerted Measures before he went off. And his going aside to a convenient distance just before, looks as if it had been design'd only to conceal the Cheat the better. With the same view perhaps he stay'd two Days where he was, after he heard that *Lazarus* was sick; that he might come exactly at the Day and Hour agreed on for the Resurrection of *Lazarus*.

N. How easy it is to joyn inconsistent Facts and Circumstances so, as to form some Appearance of a Design and Contrivance, where nothing cou'd possibly be intended. The true state of the Case is this. *Jesus* was at *Jerusalem* at the Feast of *Dedication*, which happen'd in *December*. By the freedom of his Discourse there, he so enraged the *Jews* that they took up Stones to throw at him, and threaten'd to kill him upon the spot. But he escaped out of their hands, and withdrew beyond *Jordan*. *Bethany* lay in his way from *Jerusalem* to *Bethabara*: so that he cou'd not avoid

Joh. x. 22.

Ver. 31.

Ver. 40.

avoid calling upon his Friends there; and letting them know whither he was going. But this was no less than two Months before the Death of *Lazarus*. And nobody can suppose that a Plot of a feigned Sickneſs and Death, ſhou'd be concerted ſo long beforehand. St. *John* indeed mentions the Death of *Lazarus* in the beginning of the very next Chapter, after the account of Chriſt's retiring beyond *Jordan*. But his Goſpel is chiefly a Collection of ſome unconnected Diſcourſes and Facts that the other *Evangelists* had omitted. And the Series of the Goſpel-Hiſtory ſhows that about the Space of * two Months muſt have intervned betwixt his leaving *Judea*, and his returning to *Bethany*, to raiſe *Lazarus*. The very Journey muſt have taken up ſeveral Days: St. *John* tells us that *Jeſus* abode at *Bethabara*: that many reſorted to him from neighbouring Places. He intimates that he did Miracles there; tho' *John* the Baptiſt did none: and adds that many there believed on him. You ſee now, Sir, that *Jeſus* did not retire juſt a little before the Death of *Lazarus*; nor to a convenient diſtance from *Bethany*, as you repreſented. Prudence and Self-preservation obliged him to withdraw about two Months before *Lazarus* dyed. And *Jeſus* was then two, or three Days Journey from *Bethany*; which was far from being a convenient

Joh. x. 40.

Ver. 41.

* See Mr. WHISTON'S Short view of the Chronology of the Old Teſtament, and of the Harmony of the four *Evangelists*, p. 385.

SECT. V. *convenient distance* for giving Advice, or Assistance, upon any sudden Emergency, in the mannagement of such a Plot as you suppose to have been laid. Indeed every Circumstance attending this whole Trans- action seems to have been providentially order'd in such a manner as to prevent all possible Suspicion of Fraud. The Reason of *Jesus's* tarrying two Days beyond *Jordan* after he heard that *Lazarus* was sick, is plainly told us. His Sisters sent to *Jesus* to come and prevent their Brother's Death: they thought of nothing else. (For when he came near to *Bethany*, *Martha* Joh. xi. 21. went out to meet him, and said, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my Brother had not dyed. And when he told her that her Brother shou'd rise again; she reply'd, that she knew he shou'd rise again at the general Resurrection. As yet she did not think of any other.) Now when *Jesus* first heard of *Lazarus's* being sick, and knew that he lay then at the Point of Death, he delay'd his Journey into *Judea* a-little, that *Lazarus* might be not only dead, but bury'd, before *Jesus* came to *Bethany*: for He had then resolved to raise him to Life. Therefore he told his Disciples that *Lazarus* was dead. " And I am glad for your " sakes (said he) that I was not there, [in " his Sickness,] to the intent ye may be- " lieve": that is, that your Faith may be the more firmly establish't when ye see such an astonishing Miracle as my raising him from the dead.

T. If measures had not been concerted beforehand, how came *Jesus* to know so *exactly* when *Lazarus* dyed? The message sent him by the Sisters was only that their Brother was *sick*.

M. All these matters might easily have been agreed upon: and the true design of the message might be to let *Jesus* know that the Sick-ness succeeded well; and that *Lazarus* wou'd be ready to *rise* exactly on the day appointed.

N. We need not have recourse to such absurd suppositions, in order to account for *Christ's* knowing the precise time when *Lazarus* dyed. His intelligence concerning such distant Facts was divine: and he gave many convincing proofs of his being endued with supernatural knowledge. While he was at *Cana* he assured the nobleman of *Capernaum*, that his Son who lay *there* at the point of death, was recover'd, and *well*. And when the nobleman inquired of his Servants, he found that the child's Fever left him the very *same hour* that *Jesus* told him of it. He sent home the *Canaanitish* woman; assuring her that the Devil was gone out of her Daughter: and she found it so. He told *Peter* he shou'd catch a Fish that had a piece of money in its mouth: and with that piece *Peter* payed the tribute-money. He declared to the Woman of *Samaria* many of the most secret transactions of her life; as she herself frankly owned. He told two of his Disciples the particular place and circumstances of their finding a Colt that he sent them for: and they found every thing happen exactly as he said. He sent others of them into *Jerusalem*; and assured them they wou'd find a man carrying a pitcher of water; and that if they followed him, they shou'd find a furnish'd room in the House he enter'd into, where they were to prepare the pas-

Joh. iv. 50,
52, 53.
Mat. xv. 28.
Ch. xvii. 27.
Joh. iv. 29.
Luke xix. 29,
—35.
Ch. xxii. 10.

S

fover :

SECT. V. sover: and every thing happen'd just as *Jesus* had told them. He likewise *knew what was in men's hearts*; and often disclosed their secret thoughts. When the *Pharisees* came to ensnare him, with a great compliment, and a captious question, about paying tribute to *Cæsar*; he knew their craftyness and hypocrisy; and disappointed their design. When they *watch't him* at other times, to find some handle for an accusation against him, but said nothing; he *knew their thoughts*, and plainly discover'd it to them by his Discourse. And he did the same on other occasions. When the Scribes said *within themselves* that he blasphemed (because he said to the Paralytick, *thy Sins be forgiven thee*,) *Jesus* knowing their thoughts, said, *wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?* Besides all this, he plainly foretold many future improbable Events which were all punctually accomplish't. He *foreknew all things that shou'd come upon him*; and foretold that he shou'd suffer at *Jerusalem*: that he shou'd be deliver'd up to the *Gentiles* or *Romans*; and be mock't, scourged, spit upon, crucify'd, and killed: — that he shou'd *rise again* the third day: that *Judas* wou'd betray him: that *Peter* wou'd deny him thrice; and the rest of his Disciples forsake him: — that *Mary's* anointing him shou'd be remember'd wherever the Gospel is preach't: — that his Apostles shou'd be persecuted from City to City; be scourged imprison'd and kill'd: that they shou'd be *bated of all men*; be deliver'd up to Councils and Synagogues; and be brought before Kings and governours, for his sake: that then he wou'd by his holy Spirit supply them with such words and wisdom as their adversariys shou'd not be able to gainsay nor resist. He foretold that *Jerusalem* shou'd be encompass't with armies and be made desolate:

late:—that in those days of vengeance there shou'd be *great distress in the land, and wrath upon the Jewish People*: that they shou'd *fall by the edge of the Sword*; and be *led Captives into all Nations*: that *Jerusalem* shou'd be *tródden down* by the *Gentiles*: and that in the *Temple* there shou'd not be *left one Stone upon another* that shou'd not be *thrown down*. For the punctual accomplishment of these last prophecys we have the exprefs and unquestionable testimony of *Josephus*. *Jesus* likewise foretold that he shou'd ascend into Heaven: that he would bestow the Gift of the Holy-Spirit upon his Apostles, within a *few days* after his ascension:— and that they shou'd then be *endued with power from on high*, to go and preach the Gospel unto all nations. In these prophecys there is no darkness, nor ambiguity: no distant intimations, secondary views, or mystical meanings. All is natural, plain, and obvious: they are clearly, strictly, literally true: as the corresponding Events evidently proved. These are so many demonstrations of *Christ's* being endued with supernatural knowledge; and of his acting by divine authority. So that I cannot enough wonder Mr. T. that you shou'd ask how *Jesus* knew the exact time when *Lazarus* dyed. He knew it the same way that he knew and declared the many *distant* Transactions, and *secret* Thoughts, and *future* Events that I have mention'd. Your suspicions therefore of a plot and secret measures concerted betwixt *Jesus* and *Lazarus*, appear to be intirely groundless and absurd.

T. If there was no such Scheme form'd, how came *Martha* to know so exactly the day and hour when *Jesus* wou'd be at *Bethany*? Was she endued with supernatural knowledge too? Or did she send out to watch his coming? Infidels

SECT. V.

Mat. xxiv.

15.

Luk. xxi. 23.

Ver. 24.

Ch. xix. 43.

44.

Mat. xxiv. 1.

2.

Joh. vi. 62.

Ch. xx. 17.

Ch. xiv. 12.

28.

Acts i. 5, 8.

Luk. xxiv.

49.

SECT. V. will be apt to suspect that *Jesus* sent one before him to get intelligence how the *Funeral* succeeded; and whether all things were prepared for the *resurrection*. If there was no secret that *Martha* cou'd not safely trust with the Messenger, why did she leave her Sister, and her Friends from *Jerusalem*, who came to condole with her, and slip away privately to meet *Jesus*; as if she had been afraid lest they shou'd know of his being near? Did she doubt whether he wou'd venture upon the raising of *Lazarus* before so many witnesses? And what was it that *Jesus* cou'd have to say to the Sisters in such haste, that he cou'd not stay till he came to the House? These things look dark and suspicious; and want explaining.

N. No thing is easier than to form the appearance of some deep design out of plyable, unmeaning, accidental circumstances of Facts. There is not the least mystery nor difficulty in all that you object. *Jesus* had narrowly escaped being stoned to death the last time he was at *Jerusalem*. He was therefore obliged to come to *Bethany* in the most private manner. There he was so well known that it would have been highly imprudent for him to have gone to *Lazarus'* house. And he cou'd not go to raise him from the dead, without calling his Sisters to have them, as well as his Disciples, to be witnesses of it. *Martha*, being the most eager and active, went first to meet him: and when she came back, she brought her Sister *Mary* with her to *Jesus*. What their discourse was, *St. John* has told us. It is so very natural, simple, and undesigning, that his head must be strangely turn'd who can find any think like fraud, or mystery in that interview; or in any part of the transaction. You might as well fancy that the *Jews* who

who came to comfort the Sisters, were engaged in the plot too: and that they knew of *Christ's* coming to raise *Lazarus*; and contrived to be there, on purpose to give the greater credit to the miracle. This is full as likely as that *Mary* and *Martha* shou'd have been concern'd in any Fraud on this occasion. What tho the *Jews* wept for *Lazarus*; you might urge that, tho this had a great shew of sincerity, it might only be a *prologue to a farce*: and that the *Jews* had their tears as much at command, as the Widow of *Nain* had, when she wept for her only Son! No thing can be more extravagant than such suppositions: and yet they are as plausible as any thing you have urged to support your suspicion of fraud.

SECT. V.

Disc. 5. p.
30.
P. 28.

M. I shou'd not lay any stress on such slight suspicions, if the Sequel of the transaction did not confirm them. The whole Story is full of absurditys that all tend to raise our distrust. At present I shall insist only on a few of them. And first I cannot but observe that *Jesus* is said to have wept and groan'd for the death of *Lazarus*. But why so? Was it not an absurdity to weep at all for the death of one whom he was about to raise to life? A Stoical apathy had better become him, than such childish effeminate grief.

N. The *Jews* who were present fancy'd that *Jesus* wept out of tenderness and affection towards *Lazarus*; because they knew not that *Jesus* was going to raise him to life. But why shou'd you, who know that this was his design, imagin that he wept for *Lazarus*? The Evangelist does not say so: He only tells us that *Jesus* wept. Now if it wou'd have been absurd in *Jesus* to weep for *Lazarus*; it is equally absurd to suppose that he did so.

Joh. xi. 36.

SECT. V.

M. What other occasion cou'd there be for his weeping?

N. It might proceed, partly from that overflowing tenderness and humanity which his sympathizing in the grief of *Mary* and *Martha* raised in him ; and partly from a compassionate sorrow and concern for the obstinacy and impenitence of the *Jews*. As he set an example of every other social virtue, and amiable disposition ; so it became him in a particular manner to recommend to his Disciples, not only a tender and affectionate sympathy in the affliction of friends ; but a compassionate Concern for our obstinate Enemys.

M. He might have shown and taught this in a manly way. Weeping is an effeminate weakness, unworthy of a wise man. We excuse it in women and children : but in *Men* it is always mean and foolish.

N. Since a compassionate Sympathy is natural to us ; every proper and unaffected expression of such humane Sentiments is just and right ; whether it be by tears, words, silence, or any other significant Sign. To weep excessively, or on trifling occasions, wou'd show great folly and meanness of Spirit. But to share in the grief of worthy Friends ; and feel somewhat of their distress ; and even to show our sympathy by mingling our tears with theirs ; or to be deeply grieved at the obstinacy and ruin of our Enemys ; is so far from being a sign of weakness, that it is a proof of that true Goodness, that just Compassion, and generous benevolence towards mankind, which is the height and perfection of all Virtue. *Homo sum ; (says Terence,) humani nihil a me alienum puto.* There is more of true Nature, Humanity, Wisdom, and Goodness in that single Sentence, than in all the wild
extra-

extravagant rants of *Epicætetus*, or *Seneca*. That stoical *Apathy* they recommended was a ridiculous affectation: it is foolish, brutal, and really impracticable: And it is happy for the World that it is so. *Jesus* knew human-nature far better than those vain philosophers. By his Doctrine, and his Example, he recommended to his Followers every humane tender affection, and every proper expression of Friendship and Esteem towards worthy persons; and of benevolence towards all. Of both these he gave a signal proof by his weeping when he saw *Mary's* tears, and the compassionate grief of the Jews. He kindly sympathized in her Sorrow; and showed the tenderest Compassion towards those obstinate People whose welfare he earnestly wisht; at the same time that he foresaw their impenitence and final ruin.

M. *Jesus's* Sorrow for the impenitence of the Jews, (supposing that he certainly knew it) is a better reason for his weeping, than his sympathizing in the grief of *Mary* and *Martha*.

N. Either of these reasons wou'd sufficiently account for his weeping: tho the latter was probably the chief occasion of it. He knew the obstinacy and invincible prejudices of some of the Spectators; and of the generality of the Jewish people: that the astonishing Miracle he was going to work, wou'd not have its due effect upon them. This recalled to his mind that Scene of Misery and desolation which he foresaw wou'd overtake them; and soon after expressly foretold. He grieved therefore, and *sigb'd* deeply, at the view of the Calamitys that perverse people were bringing upon themselves; and which all his endeavours, his Miracles and sufferings cou'd not prevent. This melancholy prospect often afflicted his compassionate gene-

SECT. V. rous Soul, in the most sensible manner ; and made him show his pity, and tender concern for his Countrymen, by *weeping over Jerusalem*, when he consider'd the terrible miserys that were certainly to overwhelm them. How generous was the Grief of *Jesus* ! how heroick were his Tears ! If his Grief had flown from an envious Emulation, or an insatiable thirst of vain Glory ; I shou'd have own'd his weeping to be foolish, mean, and unmanly. Such were the tears of those renowned Robbers, *Alexander*, and *Cæsar*. The one wept because he had no more Worlds to conquer : and the other when he saw his Rival's Statue in the Temple of *Hercules* ; and consider'd that at his age, *Alexander* had far outdone him in his Conquests ; that is, had been guilty of greater injustice, and mischiefs ; and more extensive ravage and ruin among mankind. The weeping of those two *Heroes* (as they are falsely called) shows that they were selfish, wicked, unfociable wretches ; who, to raise their Fame, embroil'd the world in blood and confusion ; and every-where spread terror, destruction, and all the dire calamitys of war. It shows they were themselves greater Slaves than any they ever made ; (abject Slaves to the most tyrannical unmanly Passions ;) and lost their liberty in the height of their triumphs. But the Grief and tears of *Jesus* flowed from the noblest Motives ; Wisdom, Goodness, Friendship, Compassion, and every view that is just and laudable. He sympathized with his Friends ; and grieved for his Enemys. He wept when he consider'd that all the labours of his Love were lost upon them : that all the Miracles he wrought, and the other means he used for their Conversion, tended only to harden them in their wickedness. He wept because he cou'd not sub-

due

due their prejudices, and conquer their obstinacy: because he cou'd not reconcile them to Truth and Virtue; in order to prevent their ruin, and promote their Interest and Happiness. He had the best, and most benevolent Spirit. He was a lover of Mankind; truly *Great* because ever just, good, and generous. He took delight in nothing but in doing good to all: and cou'd never be grieved at any thing but the impenitence, and ingratitude, the wickedness and misery, of those whom he endeavour'd to reclaim; and to render truly wise, virtuous, and happy.

M. It wou'd be no great concession, if I shou'd allow *Jesus* to be a greater Hero in his way than *Alexander* or *Cæsar*. Whether there was any just cause for his *weeping*, may be doubted. But certainly there cou'd be no occasion for his calling *Lazarus* out of his cave with a *loud Voice*. Was his Soul at so great a distance from his Body that he cou'd not hear a still and low voice? The dead can hear the whisper of the Almighty, if power go along with it, as soon as the Sound of a Trumpet. Disc. 5. p. 40.

N. Such terms as *loud*, *great*, *strong*, and the like are sometimes to be understood comparatively. He who leaves off whispering, or talking very low, is said to speak *aloud*; tho his voice may be very *moderate*. And since *Jesus* had probably spoken with a *lower* voice before; he now spake more *aloud*; and said with an accent of earnestness and Authority, *Lazarus come forth*. By *loud*, St. *John* meant such an *audible* voice as all the people present might easily hear. In the same manner St. *Paul* spake, when he cured one that was born a *Cripple*: he said with a *loud voice*, stand up right on thy feet: and the man immediately leap'd and walk't. Act. xiv. 9.

The

SECT. V. The Cripple was not deaf, nor distant; so that we may be sure it was not for his sake that the Apostle spake *aloud*: but that all the Company around him might hear his awful voice, as well as see the miraculous effect of it. Nor cou'd it be for *Lazarus'* sake that *Jesus* called with a loud Voice. Tho he must have obey'd the powerful Command if it had been utter'd in the softest whisper; the numerous witnesses cou'd not have known that he was called into Life by *Jesus* if his voice had not been *loud* enough to be heard by all that were present.

Disc. 5. p. 1
41, 49,

M. This is a circumstance of little moment. But certainly *Jesus's* not ordering the napkin to be taken from *Lazarus's* face, was an omission that cannot so easily be accounted for. It leaves too much room to suspect some fraud, or collusion, in the Miracle. The witnesses wou'd have been more certain that there was a real Resurrection, if they had seen the Corpse first; and been sure that *Lazarus* was dead. This omission cou'd not proceed from forgetfulness in *Jesus*. You say he was always prudent and circumspect in his actions: and indeed his conduct on this occasion is a good proof of it. He knew very well what he was doing. If the visage of *Lazarus* had been fit to be seen, no doubt the napkin wou'd have been removed. And since it was not, the cautious and considerate will conclude that there was some good reason for it. You must own, I think, that if there was a real miracle here, the matter was either ill conducted by *Jesus*; or foolishly related by his Evangelist.

Ib. p. 50.

N. We may be sure that if the Evangelist had either known or suspected any fraud in this matter, he wou'd not have mention'd an useless circumstance that might lessen the credit of the miracle.

miracle. No thing but a strict and scrupulous Sincerity cou'd have led him to mention it. But it is likely neither *Jesus* nor he thought it cou'd ever enter into the mind of man to doubt whether a Person that had been four days buried, was really dead. None of the witnesses to the resurrection of *Lazarus* cou'd doubt of his death. It is likely that some at least of those *many Jews* who were his Friends, and came now to condole with his Sisters, had seen the Corpse before it was buried. Among the Jews the mourning and lamentation of Friends over the deceased was generally very serious and solemn. Nature inclin'd them to it: and they needed only to follow its dictates. The same witnesses had probably seen other unquestionable Miracles of *Jesus*; and therefore cou'd not suspect he wou'd ever stoop to any Fraud; especially in a Case where they were sure it was impracticable. None even of the *unbelieving* Jews who were present cou'd doubt of *Lazarus*' death: their noses must have convinced them of it more effectually than a sight of the Corpse. If any-one had desir'd that satisfaction, no doubt it wou'd have been granted. The true reason why the dead body was not brought out of the Cave, and shown to the Spectators, was, because many of them had seen it already: and it must have been a disagreeable and very offensive piece of trouble for any of them to enter into the cave, and bring out a stinking Corpse. This was the more unnecessary here because *Jesus* was just going to raise it to life; and to give them the wonderful pleasure of seeing their dead Friend come, of himself, out of the cave. It cou'd scarce be expected that *Jesus* shou'd use a needless precaution against such an absurd and unnatural suspicion as you suggest. When the

Stone

SECT. V. Stone was taken away from the mouth of the Cave, he lift up his eyes, and said " Father, I
 " thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I
 " knew that thou hearest me always: but be-
 " cause of the people who stand by, I said it,
 " [that *Lazarus* shou'd be raised;] that they
 " may believe that thou hast sent me. And
 " when he had thus spoken he cry'd with a
 " loud voice, *Lazarus, come forth*. And he
 " that *had been* dead came forth, bound hand
 " and foot with grove-cloaths; and his face was
 " bound about with a napkin. Then said *Je-*
 " *sus* unto them, loose him, and let him go".
 If you duely consider'd these circumstances, you
 cou'd not possibly entertain the least suspicion
 of Fraud. In this case *Lazarus* must have been
 visited by several persons during his Sickness;
 and seen by many after his death. His face was
 tyed round with a napkin: and his hands and
 legs bound with grave-cloaths. In this condition
 he lay about four days in a cave, before *Jesus*
 came to raise him to life. Now can any-one se-
 riously doubt whether he was dead, or alive, all
 that time? If his Sickness had been feign'd;
 his death must have become *real*, in less than
 four days. He cou'd not breathe freely, nor
 live long with a napkin tyed about his face. So
 that this very circumstance, on which you found
 a suspicion of fraud, must to any-one else be a
 convincing proof that *Lazarus* was truly dead
 from the very first. Besides, as his Sickness
 whether real, or feign'd, must have weaken'd
 him; so his fasting several days in a cold Cave
 if he had been laid there *alive*, must certainly
 have kill'd him.

M. No doubt care was taken to provide him
 with necessarys: and perhaps it was by disco-
 vering some fragments of the food he subsisted
 on

on, while he was in the Cave that the *Jews* detected the Fraud in his Resurrection. SECT. V.

N. When the *Rabbi* supposed that *Lazarus* might have Food by him, to live upon in the Cave; he forgot that his *Hands* were bound, or swath'd up in *Grave-cloaths*.

M. The *Grave-cloaths* might be so wrapt about his *Hands*, as not to bind them up. Each might be swath'd separately: and then he might still feed himself.

N. But that cou'd not be St. *John's* meaning when he said that *Lazarus* came forth, having his *Hands* and *Feet* bound with *Grave-cloaths*. If he had only meant that his *Hands* and *Feet* were wrap't-up, or swath'd, each by itself; why shou'd he mention the *Feet* and *Hands*, more than the rest of the *Body*; which was certainly bound up in *Grave-cloaths* as well as the *Hands* and *Feet*?

M. Do you fancy his *Hands* were bound together?

N. I don't think they were so bound together as *People* alive are fetter'd: but it is likely that the *Grave-cloaths* deprived *Lazarus* of the use of his *Hands*. We have but a very imperfect Account of the Burying-dress that the *Jews* used in our Saviour's time. It seems to have been various, according to *People's* Rank. The σιδάριον or Napkin, was tyed about the Head and || Face. The περιβαι, or ὀθόνια included the several Bandages or Swathings for the Body. The σινδών, was a Linen-sheet, in which, sometimes the whole Body was wrapt up together. St. *Luke* mentions not only the † σινδών in which the Body of *Jesus* was wrap't; but the * ὀθόνια, or separate *Grave-cloaths*, which he left in the Sepulchre when he arose; taking only the σινδών, or Linen-sheet, away with him,

|| Joh. xi. 44.

† Luk. xxiii. 53.

* Ch. xxiv. 12.

SECT. V.

! See Mar.
xiv. 51, 52.

him, to serve for a light Garment; such as the *Jews* sometimes used to wear || alone. If the *σινδών*, or Winding-sheet, had not been used so, as to bind up *Lazarus's* Arms and Body together, there wou'd have been no occasion to loose him.

M. *Jesus* might only mean that they shou'd untie the *Napkin* that was bound about his Face.

N. If that had been all, and he had had the free use of his Hands; he himself cou'd have loosed the *Napkin*; or at least have push't it up, so that he might see; and go away without being loosed by others. But ἀφετε ὑπ' αὐγειν, implies that he cou'd hardly stir, till they help't him.

T. If his Hands and Feet were bound up in one common wrapper, as you imagin, how cou'd he come out of the Cave? He cou'd no more walk without using his Legs, than he cou'd eat without his Hands.

N. The *Linen-sheet*, in which his whole Body was wrap't, must have been looser about his Legs, than around the Arms. So that tho' he had not the free use of his Arms, or Legs, he might yet, by struggling, make a shift to come out by short Steps, such as one must take who is hamper'd about the Feet. The Sheet might be wrapt loosely about him: and when he reviv'd, and struggled to get up, he might loosen it a little more; and move forward a few Steps out of the Cave.

Disc. i. p.
41.

M. Had the *Napkin* been taken away that the Spectators might see the change of his Countenance from Death to Life; it wou'd have been a more convincing Proof of his real Resurrection, than that seeing him come out of the Cave muffled up in Grave-cloaths.

N. If *St. John* had told us that the Spectators saw the mortify'd looks of *Lazarus*; and the miraculous change

change of his countenance from death to life; Infidels wou'd have said that a pale countenance, or ghastly look is no infallible sign of death: that they who faint away, look as pale as death: and that the sudden return of sense, and motion is no *miraculous* change. The truth is, if the spectators had seen the change of *Lazarus's* countenance from a seeming death, to real life; it wou'd rather have gratify'd their curiosity, than effectually convinc'd their Reason: because they wou'd probably have seen no more than what happens to those who from a swoon, and a very pale lifeless look, return in an instant to the conscious use of their senses. In such cases the opening of the Eyes, and the use of speech, or other voluntary motions, are the first signs of returning Sense. The blood and colour does not flow to the lips and cheeks in a moment. And when a Corpse is brought to life, there can be no doubt whether the person was really dead. The traces of death, the pale complexion, sunk eyes, and ghastly aspect, must continue for some time. Tho the heart beats, and the blood circulates; and the use of Sense, Speech, and Motion is immediately perceiv'd; we must not suppose that the revived person has the look, aire, or countenance he used to have before he sicken'd. It cannot possibly be expected. Strength, Vigour, and a healthy look must return by degrees. This is the constant course of nature; which a Miracle cannot be suppos'd to interrupt any farther than is necessary. It is so far from being probable, or indeed possible, that a person just raised to life, after being dead several days, shou'd have a lively aspect, and healthy look; that it is both *expedient*, and in the nature of things *unavoidable*, that he shou'd for several hours at
I least,

SECT. V. least, (and perhaps for some days) have in his Face a ghastly aire, and other plain marks of that Death, from which he is raised. Hence it appears that the removing the napkin from *Lazarus'* face, to show the Spectators his ghastly visage was really an unnecessary trouble. His *mortify'd looks* must still have appear'd visibly enough after he was brought to life. Nor cou'd the Spectators any-more doubt of his having been certainly dead; than of his being really brought to life again.

Disc. 5. p.
51.

P. 49.

M. It is plain from the story in *St. John* that there was a dispute among the by-standers, whether it was a real miracle or not: For *tho many of the Jews* who had seen the things that *Jesus* did, *believed on him*: on the other hand it is certain, according to *christian Commentators*, that *some* did not believe the miracle, but *went their ways to the Pharisees*, and *told them what things Jesus had done*: that is, told them in what manner the intrigue was mannaged; and complain'd of the Fraud in it.

N. I dare say no *Commentator* whatever, either *Christian* or *Heathen*, besides the *Rabbi*, ever asserted that *some* of the spectators *did not believe the miracle*. But I don't wonder at his fathering his own ridiculous fictions upon *christian Commentators*: seeing he tells us, *it is plain* from the Story in *John* that there was a dispute among the by-standers, whether the resurrection of *Lazarus* was a real miracle or not. The *Evangelist* does not give the least intimation of any such thing. Those witnesses who gave the *Pharisees* an account of the matter cou'd not doubt whether the raising of *Lazarus* was a real Miracle: they had all the evidence of their Senses for it. The only thing that they cou'd possibly doubt of, was, whether the Miracle was a suffi-

cient proof of *Christ's* divine Mission, and of the truth of his Doctrine. What report these prejudiced *Jews* made to the *Pharisees*, appears plainly enough from the very next verse. "Then Joh. xi. 47.
 "gather'd the chief-priests and pharisees a
 "Council, and said what do we? for this man
 "doth many Miracles. If we let him thus a-
 "lone, all men will believe on him: and the
 "Romans will come and take away both our
 "place and nation." They were afraid that *Jesus* having such an influence over the multi-
 tude wou'd set up himself to be their King: and that such a rebellion wou'd alarm the *Romans*, and lead them to punish the jewish nation with captivity; or the intire loss of those remains of Liberty which as yet they allowed the *Jews* to enjoy. But when *Caiaphas* the High-priest told them that it was more expedient that one man shou'd die for the safety of the people, than that the whole nation shou'd perish and be destroyed: then, from that day forth they took Counsel together how they might put *Jesus* to death.

M. If there had been an indisputable Miracle wrought in raising *Lazarus*; why were the chief-priests and pharisees so incensed upon it as to take Counsel to put *Jesus* to death? where was the provocation? I can conceive none. Tho the *Jews* were ever so canker'd with malice and hatred to *Jesus* before, yet such a stupendous miracle was enough to stop their mouths and turn their hearts.

N. I shewed you before that the advice of *Caiaphas*, and the resolution of the Jewish Council to destroy *Jesus* was evidently founded upon political views. They had not the least Suspicion of any fraud in the raising of *Lazarus*. They cou'd not but acknowledge that

T

Jesus

SECT. V. *Jesus wrought many Miracles.* Their only fear and concern was that all men wou'd believe on him: and under the pretence of being the *Messiah* he wou'd take upon him to be *King* of the *Jews*: and that by these means their nation might be enslaved and ruined by the *Romans*. But however that might be, they were sure that if the Doctrine of *Jesus* prevail'd, the heathen nations wou'd be set upon the level with God's chosen people: that *Jerusalem* wou'd no longer be the chief place of worship and resort: that their spiritual Authority over the people, and their sacrifices wou'd be slighted: and all their power and perquisites be lost. The Priests and pharisees did not hate *Jesus* for being a *healer of Diseases*, and doing such beneficent Miracles as the raising of *Lazarus*; but because he freely opposed and condemn'd their Errors; and reprov'd them for their hypocrisy, rapaciousness, and other vices: because he threaten'd their nation with ruin; and taught a scheme of Doctrine which they cou'd not relish. These were the provocations you inquired after. Hence their rage and inveterate malice against *Jesus* flowed; and their wicked resolution to destroy him.

Disc. 5. p.
45.

Disc. 5. p.
43.

M. Supposing their prejudices against *Jesus* were invincible; yet why was poor and inoffensive *Lazarus*, on whom this good and great work was wrought, an object of their hatred? why were the chief-priests so enraged as to take council to put not only *Jesus* but *Lazarus*, to death?

Ch. xii. 9,
10.

N. The reason of their hatred and rage against *Lazarus* is plainly given by *St. John*.
 “ When the people heard that *Jesus* was come
 “ to *Bethany*, they came from *Jerusalem*; not
 “ for his sake only, but that they might see *La-*
 “ *zarus*

“ *zarus* also, whom he had raised from the dead. Therefore the chief-priests consulted that they might put *Lazarus* also to death; *because* by reason of him many of the *Jews* went away and believed on *Jesus*.” This was the true cause of their rage against *Lazarus*. He was a man of figure and credit; well known at *Jerusalem*; and much beloved. His testimony had great weight: and the numbers that were converted by it, and forsook the priests, encreased dayly. Nothing cou’d so effectually put a stop to this as their destroying *Lazarus*; who was the more obnoxious to their rage, by his being a particular Friend, and disciple of *Jesus*. The Miracle in raising him to life was most stupendous and unquestionable. It put an end to all their Cavils: and so far stopt their mouths that they cou’d object nothing to it. But that it might spread no further among the people, they resolved to cut-off *Lazarus*: which wou’d have struck a terror into the witnesses of his Resurrection; and have obliged them to be either quite silent, or very cautious. You see now that *Lazarus* was not hated and persecuted by the *Jews* merely for having a good and wonderful work done upon him, but because he was a living monument, and unquestionable Evidence of *Christ*’s miraculous power; and gave such a testimony to his Divine Authority and Mission that *all men* were coming to believe on him. The Temple was like to be forsaken; and the priests neglected. They prevailed nothing by all their mad zeal and outrage; but found *the world was gone after Jesus*. And all this was chiefly owing to the resurrection of *Lazarus*. These were the reasons of the inveteracy and rage of the Priests and Pharisees against him. And it is such a credible and prob-

Joh. xi. 37.

See V. 3, 5.

Disc. 5. p.

44.

Joh. xii. 19.

P. 43.

SECT. V. *bable account of this matter as intirely comports with reason and sense: and is agreeable to the Practice and Conduct of the priests of other nations, when possess't by the same blind zeal that influenc'd the Pharisees.*

Disc. 5. p.
45.

M. But supposing what is never to be granted, that the Jews of old were so inhuman, brutish, and barbarous as to hate and persecute *Lazarus* as well as *Jesus* for this miracle; yet why did *Jesus* and his Disciples, with *Lazarus*, run away and abscond upon it? for they *walk't no more openly* among the Jews; but went thence into a Country near to the wilderness: and there *Jesus* continued with his Disciples. Is not here a plain sign of guilt and Fraud? men that have God's cause, and Truth, and Power on their side, never want Courage and resolution to stand to it. However you may palliate the cowardly and timorous conduct of *Jesus* and his Confederates in this case; yet with me it is like demonstration that there was a discover'd cheat in the miracle: or they wou'd have undauntedly faced their Enemys, without fears and apprehensions of danger from them.

N. Here is nothing but mistake and misrepresentation; and wrong reasoning upon false facts. *St. John* says nothing of *Lazarus'* running away and absconding: but rather intimates the contrary. He tells us indeed that when, upon the advice of *Caiaphas*, the jewish Council had resolved to put *Jesus* to death; he appear'd no more openly among the Jews for a while; but withdrew with his Disciples; because the proper time for laying down his life was not yet come. He had for the very same reason several times before this, withdrawn himself from the rage and violence of the Priests and Pharisees. So that his retiring now with his

Dis

Disciples towards the wilderness cou'd not raise the least suspicion against *Jesus* either of guilt or Fear. It only shewed a prudent care to preserve his life till the time shou'd come for him to resign it. When that time approach't, he return'd to *Jerusalem*; and appear'd openly among the Jews. He came first to *Bethany* where *Lazarus* was: who was so far from *absconding* that he seems to have continued still at his own House; where *Jesus* found him. The time for his death being now at hand; he shewed no signs of guilt, or fear: nor took any more care to avoid the rage of his Enemys. He seems rather to have purposely exasperated them by entering into *Jerusalem*, in an humble kind of Triumph, amidst the acclamations and *Hosannahs* of the Multitudes that followed him. He now taught daily in the Temple: and by every step of his conduct manifestly shewed that it was not Cowardice that made him withdraw for a while. Prudence obliged him to preserve his life, without working continual miracles, till the proper time shou'd come for him to part with it. And then he undauntedly faced his Enemys; without any timorous dread of that death, disgrace, and inconceivable torment, which he foretold, and was sure, they wou'd inflict upon him.

SECT. V.

Joh. xii. 1.

Luk. xix. 47

Disc. 5. p. 45.

P. 46.

M. Whatever the Evangelists say, it is unnatural to hate a miraculous healer of Diseases; and there must be somewhat suppress't about the inveteracy of the Jews to *Jesus*; else his healing power, if it was so great as is imagin'd, must have reconciled them to him. But that they shou'd hate not only *Jesus* for raising the dead, but the person raised by him, is improbable, incredible, and impossible. If Historians can parallel this Story of the malignity of the Jews

SECT. V.  towards *Jesus*, and *Lazarus*, upon such a real Miracle with any thing equally barbarous and inhumane, in any other Sect or Nation, there wou'd be some reason to believe what is charg'd upon the Jews to be true. Or if such inhumanity abstractedly consider'd be at all agreeable to the conceptions any one can form of human-nature in the most unciviliz'd and brutish people; I shou'd grant the *Jews* in the Case before us to be such a people. But I can see no reason to entertain worse thoughts of them than of other people.

N. There can be no such thing as *inhumanity abstractedly consider'd*. Human-nature is incapable of it. Wherever any inhuman action is done, it flows either from some great Provocation, or violent Passion; or from outrageous Zeal, which is the only principle that can lead men to calm, inhumane, steddly cruelty. But even *there* the *inhumanity* is not to be *abstractedly consider'd*. The unhappy Sufferers, however just and good, are represented as *Hereticks* and the worst of Men: and the Inquisitor or Persecuter thinks he *doth service* to *God* by destroying or punishing them. I have sufficiently explain'd the reasons of the rage and malice of the Chief-priests and Pharisees both against *Jesus*, and *Lazarus*. And it is easy to find parallel Cases where real Miracles did not check the rage and malice shewn against those who wrought them. The Rabbi talks as if he never read or heard of *Pbaraob's* obstinacy after he and his people had suffer'd long under the terrible plagues and calamitys that *Moses* miraculously brought upon them. He still harden'd his heart; and even threaten'd *Moses* with death, if he ever came again into his presence. Nay tho' the Lord smote the first-born of all the *Egyptians*,

Exod. xiii.

15.

Ch. x. 28.

Ch. xi. 4, 5.

Ch. xii. 29,

30.

tians, so that there was not a House where there was not one dead: yet, when at *Pharaoh's* urgent request the *Israelites* went out of *Egypt* into the wilderness, his heart was still turn'd against them; he pursued them in a hostile manner to destroy them; and was at last drown'd with his army in the Red-sea. Tho *Elijah* wrought several unquestionable miracles, *Jezebel* threaten'd him with death. When he foretold *Abaziah's* death, that King sent a Captain and fifty men to take him: and tho the Prophet called down fire from Heaven that consumed them, yet *Abaziah* sent out another party to apprehend him; who perish't in the same manner. How often did the *Israelites* themselves rebel against God and murmur against his servant *Moses*, their Deliverer, and Guide and Lawgiver; of whose miraculous power they had the most convincing proofs? They were angry with him for bringing them out of *Egypt*: and were almost ready to stone him. When he was absent from them, but a short time, they rebell'd again, and fell into Idolatry; and forced *Aaron* to make Gods for them, who shou'd go (or be carry'd) before them; as the neighbouring nations had. And when *Aaron* made them a molten Calf of their Ear-rings; they said, *these be thy Gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt!* When *Korah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram* rebell'd against *Moses* and *Aaron*; the earth open'd and swallowed them up; as *Moses* foretold it wou'd: the people were astonish't, and fled at that dreadful Sight; being afraid lest the Earth shou'd swallow them up too. Yet the very next day, all the people mutiny'd against *Moses* and *Aaron* again; and charg'd them with murdering the people of the Lord. Upon this a Plague came and destroyed 14000 of them. But soon after

SECT. V.

Ch. xiv. 5.

2 Kings xix.

2 Kings i. 10, 12.

Ex. xvii. 4.

Ex. xxxii.

Num. xvi. 28, --- 34.

SECT. V.

Ch. xxi. 5.

they spake against God, and against Moses; and complain'd that they were brought out of *Egypt* to die in the wilderness. In short, the *Old-Testament* every-where represents to us the many surprizing Miracles and wonderful Works that the Almighty impower'd *Moses*, and other Prophets, to do for the deliverance, the protection, or the punishment of the *Israelites*: and on the other hand it gives us one continued History of the disobedience, ingratitude, murmurings, Idolatry and Wickedness of that stubborn and rebellious people; and of the repeated Punishments they suffer'd for their heinous Sins. I wou'd not have you conclude however, that I think the Jews of old were capable of more unjust, barbarous, and wicked actions than other people. There is no instance of malice, unrighteousness, and inhumanity, in which some pretended Christians have not only equal'd, but far exceeded them. The *Inquisition* among the Papists, their persecutions, their massacring many thousands of men, women and children; their barbarous way of torturing good and upright people for their opinions; and for being so sincere and honest as not to speak or act against their Conscience;—I say these unrighteous, unchristian, inhuman practices, shew sufficiently that there is no kind of wickedness or Mischief; no instance of cruelty and barbarity to which blind zeal and bigotry will not carry men.

M. I readily grant that some of the principles and practices of the *Papists* are more wicked than those of the *Jews*: but the Parallel between them fails in this, that the *Papists* never resisted the evidence of such an unquestionable miracle as raising the dead: which must have such a convincing force, that I don't think it possible for any people to be so bigotted, bi-

as't,

as't, and prejudiced, as not to be wrought on by it. SECT. V.

N. How little do you seem to know of human-nature ! There is no thing so absurd and contradictory that Bigotry and Prejudice will not lead men to believe it: no thing can be more wicked and barbarous than what cruel Zealots have practised: And there is no degree of Evidence so great that Bigots and Scepticks cannot reject it. The Papists have not resisted the evidence of Miracles indeed ; because it is impossible they shou'd ever be put to that tryal. Divine Wisdom will not permit that a miraculous Power shou'd be employed to convince men that a bit of bread cannot be *truly* and *substantially* the body of *Christ* : that divine adoration cannot be due to a crucifix, nor to a consecrated wafer: that *worshipping* and *bowing down* to the *Image* or *likeness* of *any thing* in *Heaven*, is a direct breach of the second Commandment: that *a voluntary humility* in *worshipping* of *Angels* or the *Virgin Mary*, with prayer, praises, and incense, &c. is a forsaking, (or *not holding* to) *Christ* the head of the Church, and the only *Mediator betwixt God and man*: that praying in an unknown Tongue is condemn'd by *St. Paul*: and that People cannot joyn in publick worship when they don't understand what they hear: and to add no more, that the burning honest people alive for not believing nonsense, or professing self-evident Errors, is not the way to *do God service*. Miracles cannot be wrought to prove such evident truths. Reason, Scripture, and Common-sense, plainly demonstrate them. Nor is it likely, that those who maintain the opposite Errors wou'd be convinc'd of their absurdity, tho one that had been buried four days among them, shou'd be raised from the dead

SECT. V.

dead for their conviction. We have our Saviour's Authority for this conclusion: and all the force of Reason to support it. For seeing all Papists resist the plainest Evidence of their Senses, and all the Power of demonstration: seeing their persecuting Priests oppose and counter-act the strongest Instincts and Inclinations of Nature (which powerfully lead men to Compassion, Humility, benevolence, and every social affection;) and wilfully disregard and transgress the plainest precepts of that Gospel which was establish'd by Miracles: seeing they resist and oppose all the evidence and light of Reason, and Sense, Nature, and Revelation; and will not hearken to *Christ* and his Apostles: we cannot but conclude that they wou'd not be persuaded of the Truth, tho they shou'd see one rise from the dead to convince them.

Disc, 5. p. 48.

M. Such a manifest Miracle, whatever were the design of it, must strike Men with awe and reverence. And none cou'd hate or persecute the Author of it; lest he who cou'd raise the dead, shou'd exert his Power against themselves: and either wound or smite them dead with it. There must therefore have been some Fraud in the resurrection of *Lazarus*: else the Jews wou'd have revered and adored the Power of him that did it.

N. Most of those who saw this Miracle, and such others as candidly inquired into the truth of it, did justly reverence and adore the Power of *Jesus*. The common people generally judg'd right. They were not so strongly influenced by prejudice as their spiritual pride: nor cou'd they resist the evidence of Sense and Reason; but readily acknowledg'd and revered the divine Power that *Jesus* displayed in the astonishing Miracles he wrought. Those who hated and

per-

persecuted him to the last, were chiefly the SECT. V.
 Priests and Rulers, and their Dependents. And 
 among them no doubt there were many *Saddu-* See Acts v.
cees and *Scepticks*: Men who doubted of what 19. Ch. xxiii. 8.
 they did not *see*, or *feel*: who believed that *there*
is no Spirit; and that there can be *no resurrection*
 from the dead. Such men may be as apt as
 you to suspect fraud or mistake in Miracles:
 and therefore wou'd not scruple to hate and per-
 secute the author of them. I shewed you be-
 fore that the dread of the most miraculous and
 terrible power did not hinder *Pharaoh* and *Jeze-
 bel* from threatning and attempting to destroy
Moses and *Elijah*: nor restrain the *Israelites* of
 old from murmuring and rebelling against *Mo-
 ses* and *Aaron*; tho the very day before they had
 seen the Earth open and swallow up *Korab*,
Dathan, and *Abiram*; and fire from Heaven
 consume their accomplices; which were far
 more dreadful and stupendous Events, than if
 one had risen from the dead to pacify them.

M. If *Jesus* according to the Evangelists was
 arraign'd for a Deceiver and Blasphemer in pre- Disc. s. p. 57.
 tending to the Sonship and Power of God by
 his Miracles; in all probability this piece of
 Fraud in raising *Lazarus* was one article of the
 Indictment against him. And what makes it
 the more probable is, that the Chief-priests and
 Pharisees from the date of his pretended Mi-
 racle took Council together to put him to
 Death.

N. I grant that if there had been any fraud
 discover'd, or so much as suspected in the re-
 surrection of *Lazarus*, this wou'd undoubtedly
 have been one article of the Indictment against
Jesus. But since no such thing appears to have
 been laid to his charge; this is an evident proof
 that nothing of that kind cou'd be pretended.

Had

SECT. V: Had there been the least colour of suspicion against him on this Score, the witnesses who saw *Lazarus* rais'd, and every Person in his Family, wou'd have been strictly examin'd: and the truth have been brought to light. It was certainly the Interest of the Pharisees and Chief-priests to have search'd the matter to the bottom. And if any Fraud, or just suspicion of it cou'd have been proved; we may be sure they wou'd have done it. There wou'd then have been no need of seeking about for false witnesses; no occasion to charge him with offences that were neither *true*, nor *capital*. They needed not then to have charg'd him with stirring up the People; *perverting the Nation*; and *forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar*: or with a Design to *destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days*. If they cou'd have prov'd him guilty of such an imposture as you suspect him of, doubtless they wou'd have done it. St. *John* tells us, that from that day in which *Caiaphas* shew'd them the Expediency of one man's dying for the People that the whole Nation might not perish; they took Council together to put *Jesus* to death. But this was no *new* resolution. All that St. *John* cou'd mean by their taking it, *from that day*, is, that seeing their High-priest had convinc'd them that the death of *Jesus* wou'd tend to the Safety of the Nation; they were now more *unanimous, hearty, and zealous* than they had been before; and were determin'd to execute their former purpose *without delay*. Before this Resolution, the *Pharisees* had several times taken Counsel how they might destroy *Jesus*. With this view they often watch't him: and propos'd captious Questions to him; as about the lawfulness of paying tribute to *Cæsar*, and of healing on the Sabbath-day; that

Luke xxiii.
2.

Ch. xi, 53.

Mat. xii. 14.
Mar. iii. 6.
Luke vi. 7.
11.

that they might ensnare him in his Discourse; and find some handle for an accusation against him. The resurrection of *Lazarus* having procured *Jesus* many Disciples, the Chief-priests and Pharisees were enrag'd to the highest degree. They cou'd neither deny that he *did many miracles*; nor bear to see the *world gone after him*. And therefore they now resolved to put him to death as soon as they cou'd conveniently do it. But here they met with great difficulty. When he came to *Bethany* just before the Passover, they consulted how they might take him by *subtilty* and kill him: and agreed that it was *not* safe for them to do it on the *Feast day*, lest there should be an uproar among the people. This shews that the multitude was on *Jesus*' Side; and were fully convinc'd of his Integrity. Had there been the least reason to suspect any Fraud in the raising of *Lazarus*; much more if there had been witnesses to prove it, the Chief-Priests and Pharisees needed not to have used so much precaution in seizing of *Jesus*. The people were certainly prejudiced in their favour; and wou'd never have sided with *Jesus* against their Rulers and spiritual Guides, if the irresistible evidence of his Miracles and the integrity of his Conduct had not convinced them of his acting by a divine Authority. The Priests were so afraid of the multitude's taking part with *Jesus*, that they did not venture to seize him in a publick manner; nor in the open day, tho he taught daily in the Temple: but having bribed *Judas* to let them know when they might apprehend him in a private place; they sent out a great number of their officers and dependents, whom *Judas* led to a retired Garden that *Jesus* used to frequent; and towards night they went with torches and lanterns, and laid hold of him.

They

Mat. xxvi. 3.

4. 5.

Luke xix. 47

SECT. V. They led him away directly to the High-priest's house where the Council was assembled. Thence they carried him to *Pilate*; and by threatening, tumult, and mobbing, they at last prevail'd with him, against his conscience, to condemn *Jesus*, and to deliver him up to be crucify'd. So much were they afraid of the people, and in haste to compass their design, that betwixt Thursday evening, and Friday noon (in the space of about sixteen hours) they got him seized; examin'd again, and again; hurry'd about from *Annas*, to *Caiaphas* the High-Priest; from him to *Pilate*; thence to *Herod*; then back to *Pilate* again: who gave him up to their rage and importunity: and after his being scourg'd, mock't, crown'd with thorns, and insulted; they led him away with a guard of Souldiers the very same day before noon to be crucify'd.

Luke xxiii.
23.
Mat. xxvii.
20, 24.

Disc. 5. p.
52.

Mat. xxvii.
23.

Luke xxii.
23.

Mark xv. 25.

M. Whatever was the reason of all this haste and hurry, it cou'd not be any dread the Chief-Priests had of *the people*, for there was an universal and vehement outcry, and demand at *Jesus*' tryal, for his crucifixion. *All the people* said, *His Blood be upon us and upon our children*: they were *instant with loud voices*: and it was *to content the people*, that *Pilate* releas'd *Barabbas* unto them, and deliver'd up *Jesus* to be crucify'd. Now if, as you pretend, the people were so much prepossest in favour of *Jesus* before, that the Priests were afraid to seize him publicly, or in the open day; one wou'd think that some secret Crime of *Jesus* was then detected; perhaps his fraud in raising *Lazarus*; which made the multitude forsake his Interest, and insist with so much violence to have him crucify'd.

N. When I said that the multitude favour'd *Jesus*, I cou'd not mean that *all* the people were intirely on his side: but that a considerable

Num-

Number, (probably the far greatest part) were convinced of his Innocence. It is not to be wonder'd that the *Chief-Priests* and *Rulers*, with the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, shou'd have a *Party* among the multitude; and upon such an urgent occasion, be able to draw together a great number of their dependents, whom they might persuade to do what they pleased. Of * *these* a sufficient party were sent out to apprehend *Jesus*; and the same trusty *band* no doubt was employ'd to cry out for his crucifixion. They were headed and led on by the *Chief-Priests* and *Rulers*; who instigated, and mov'd them to demand that *Pilate* wou'd release *Barabbas* to them, and destroy *Jesus*. The Judgment-hall where *Pilate* sat cou'd not contain a vast multitude. The *Priests*, *Pharisees* and *Rulers* themselves must have been a considerable number: and their officers, servants, and other dependents whom they cou'd persuade and over-awe, were *the People* who cry'd out to have *Jesus* crucify'd. Less than a hundred voices were enough to deafen *Pilate*. He declared that he found *no fault* in *Jesus*. But when they told him that if he released *Jesus*, he cou'd not be a *Friend* to *Cæsar*, he was afraid of their † representing his Crimes to the Emperor; and was soon prevail'd on to give such a sentence against *Jesus* as they requir'd: tho at the same time he wash't his hands before the multitude; and said, *I am innocent of the blood of this just Person: see ye to it*. It does not appear that there were any other people there besides those whom the *Chief-Priest* and *Rulers* over-aw'd, and influenc'd. And if there

Joh. xviii. 3.

Luke xxviii.

23.
Mat. xxvii.

20.
Mark xv. 13.

John xix. 12.

13.

Luke xxiii.

24.

Mat. xxvii.

24.

* See Mat. xxvi. 47. Mark xiv. 43. John xviii. 3. Ch. vii. Luke xxvii. 50.

† See the *Credibility of the Gospel History*, p. 116. 2d Edit.

SECT. V. had been a multitude present who condemn'd their proceedings, and wou'd have justify'd *Jesus*, as *Pilate* did; it cou'd not be supposed that in the Judgment-hall, guarded by Souldiers, the people who favour'd *Jesus* would have had courage enough to appear openly in his behalf against *their* Priests and Rulers, whom they saw so eager and active to have him destroyed. All that cou'd be expected from them was that they wou'd not join with his malicious Enemys; but be silent spectators of that injustice and violence which they secretly condemn'd, but were not able to oppose. This they did at his crucifixion. *All the people* that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, *smote their breasts* (as a testimony of their grief and indignation) and *return'd*. Here is an evident proof that they did not look upon *Jesus* as an Impostor, or Malefactor, (nor in the least suspect him of any fraud in the raising of *Lazarus*;) but as a righteous Person, and a great Prophet, put to death most unjustly by the Chief-Priests.

Luke xxiii.
48.

T. You seem to forget Gentlemen that you were upon the resurrection of *Lazarus*.

Disc. 5. p.
41. v. 52.

N. It was rather a seeming, than a real digression we had fallen into. But I think we have almost finish't this Subject.

M. For the conclusion of the whole matter, I shall only observe, that *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*, who knew as much of this sham miracle as *John*, had not the Confidence to report it: because when they wrote many Eye-witnesses of the Fraud were alive to disprove and contradict them. Therefore they confin'd their Narratives to *Jesus*' less juggling tricks that had pass'd more current. But after the Jewish State was dissolv'd, their judicial records were destroyed, and

and every-body dead that cou'd confute him, *John* ventures abroad the story of this miracle. And if the good Providence of God had not infatuated him in the insertion of the Circumstances here observed, it might have pass'd through all generations to come, as well as it had done for many past, for a grand miracle.

N. Error is always various, inconsistent, contradictory, and therefore indefensible: while Truth is steddy, uniform and consistent; and, being view'd in every light, appears unchangeably the same. This never failing observation is particularly verify'd by Mr. *W.*'s late attacks upon the *literal Sense*, or real truth, of the Gospel; in which he has fallen into the grossest Contradictions and inconsistencies. At first he told us, that the story of *Lazarus's* resurrection seems to be intirely *John's* own *Invention*. Afterwards his *Rabbi* says, that *Matthew*, *Mark* and *Luke* knew as much of this Sham-miracle as *John*: only they had not the confidence to report it, for fear of having the Fraud disproved by Eye-witnesses. He charge's *John* with relating Storys that are derogatory to the honour of *Jesus*; and spoil his fame for a worker of Miracles: and seems to fancy he did it out of Spite; and to blast *Christ's* reputation. And yet he elsewhere affirms that *John* as well as the other Evangelists design'd to aggrandize the fame of *Jesus* for a worker of miracles. He rails with a peculiar bitterness against the beloved Disciple; and seems to think well of the other Evangelists. At other times he charges them all with romancing for the honour of their Master: and insinuates, that even *Luke* invented the Story of *Jesus's* raising the widow's son. But how absurd are such Suspicions! The other three Evangelists were the Disciples (tho *Mark* was not an Apostle) of

SECT. V. *Jesus*. They had a perfect knowledge of what they relate: and in their Gospels they show all the marks of candour and honesty that can be desired. They were so scrupulously sincere as to record not only their own smaller Failings, but their grosser Faults, in the most candid manner: tho they needed not always to have done it. And seeing they sully'd their own reputation out of a strict regard to Truth and Integrity; is it not absurd to suppose that they wou'd sacrifice the Truth itself to the honour of their Master; whom you represent as a wicked Impostor that cou'd have no good or valuable Quality to recommend him to their Esteem? Cou'd they possibly love one of such a worthless despicable Character better than themselves? or show a greater concern for his reputation, than their own? Is not their recording all the vile reproaches that the *Jews* charged him with; and other things that seem to lessen his character, and to tend to his disparagement, an evident proof, that they cou'd not devyse lyes to raise or support his Credit? Can you possibly believe that twelve poor artless, ignorant men cou'd lay a deep plot to deceive all the world; and hope to succeed in it? Cou'd they who were bigotted to the Religion, and worship in which they were brought up, take the utmost pains to overturn and destroy it? and bestow all the labours of their life to establish an unprofitable imposture in its stead? Cou'd they unanimously agree to forsake their Home, their Relations, and their Country, and wander through the world, amidst daily hazards and hardships; in hopes that they shou'd perswade people of all nations to believe and practise the doctrine of an obscure person, who was crucify'd at *Jerusalem*? Cou'd they daily preach, and seemingly practise, sincerity,

cerity, Goodness, and every Virtue: and yet underhand carry on the vilest imposture? Cou'd they renounce all prospect of Advantage, Honour and Pleasure in this Life; and yet be so thorowly false, deceitful, and wicked, that they cou'd have no possible hopes of any happiness in the next? Cou'd they chuse to undergo the greatest toils, reproaches, persecutions, imprisonment, and Death itself, in order to propagate the belief of such things as were their own Fictions and wicked Contrivances? Tho they had no liberal Education nor Learning, and knew only their mother-tongue; cou'd they yet travel thro' the world, and successfully preach the Gospel to all nations; without having the power of Miracles, or the Gift of Tongues? Cou'd they combine to propagate a cheat; and consult together about the narratives they wrote of the Doctrine, Miracles, and Actions of *Jesus*; and yet differ from one another in several points and circumstances of what they relate? Cou'd they be masters of so much subtlety, and refined policy, as to impose upon the most wise and considerate persons of all ages and nations: and yet so extremely weak and foolish as to record Miracles in the Gospels with such absurd and incredible Circumstances as are grossly and notoriously contradictory to sense and Reason? No thing can be more inconsistent and impossible than these Suppositions. They contain such manifest absurditys, and incredibilitys, as none can swallow but the most weak and credulous of mankind. But concerning the Integrity of those three Evangelists who were the immediate Disciples of *Jesus* I have said enough. As for *Luke*, he cou'd not be bias't or prejudiced in favour of Christianity. He never saw *Jesus*: but being educated an Infidel, he must have

SECT. V.

Disc. 4. p. 52, & 62.
Disc. 5. p. 38.

SECT. V.  been converted by seeing the Miracles that were wrought by St. *Paul*, and the other Apostles. *Luke* was a Man of Parts and Learning; as appears by the politeness of his Style, and his creditable Profession. So that there can be no room for suspecting him to have been either *superstitious*, or *credulous*. After his conversion he became St. *Paul*'s companion and fellow-traveller, and composed his *Gospel*, and the *Acts* of the Apostles: both of which must have been revised and approved by St. *Paul*. He tells us that he had a *perfect understanding* (or, had *diligently search't into the truth*) of all things from the very first; and had his intelligence from the Apostles themselves, who were *Eye-witnesses* and *Ministers of the Word*. Now what pretence can there be for suspecting the veracity of such a reputable unbiass't Author? Having his information from *Eye-witnesses* whose Credit was unquestionable, he cou'd not be *mistaken* in what he relates. And tho he became a Christian upon the strongest conviction, he does not show the least favour, or partiality, either towards *Jesus*, or his Apostles: but agrees with the other Evangelists in mentioning the false reproaches that the Jews cast upon *Jesus* (without offering any vindication of him;) and in recording the gross follies and Faults of his Apostles. In short, in his Gospel we find all the same marks of Integrity and Candour that are in the other: and we have the testimony of plain, honest, illiterate Fishermen confirm'd by a polite, impartial learned Physician; who was himself an Eye-witnes of as astonishing Miracles wrought by St. *Paul*, to prove the truth of Christ's doctrine, as any that he relates in his Gospel. And tho he as well as *Matthew* and *Mark* forgot to record the resurrection of *Lazarus*, and several other

Luk. i. 2.

other Miracles of *Jesus*: yet *Matthew* and *Mark* mention his raising the Ruler's daughter: and *Luke* relates the raising of the Widow's son to life; and many other Miracles equally great: which sufficiently prove that *Jesus* was endued with divine power; and confirm the truth and credibility of his having raised *Lazarus* likewise from the dead.

M. Mr. W. rightly observes that there is no need to argue against the truth of the two resurrection-stories mention'd by *Matthew* and *Luke*: you know *omne majus continet minus*: and if the greatest of the three miracles be an imposture, the two less ones, of consequence, are artifice and fraud. Diss. 5. p. 53.

N. The three Miracles that *Jesus* wrought in raising the dead, equally confirm and support one another. Since there can be no pretence for questioning the truth of the two first; they plainly confirm the credibility of the last. And since I have shown that the Circumstances of *Lazarus*'s resurrection are all probable and consistent; by your own maxim, this last and greatest Miracle fully establishes the truth of the two former. There is a perfect consistency and harmony among the Gospels as to the Miracles and other *Facts* they contain: and each tends to ascertain and support the authority and truth of the rest.

M. Tho I have no farther objections to urge at present against the Story of *Lazarus*, you'll remember that Mr. W. is resolved to have the other bout at it from some other Circumstances; the consideration of which will make it appear to be such a contexture of folly and fraud in its contrivance, execution, and relation, as is not to be equall'd in all romantick History. Diss. 5. p. 38.

N. He threatens so terribly, that I'm sure he has already done and said all that he can. He bluster'd at the same extravagant rate in the introduction to his objections against the cure of the Paralytick; and when they came to be examin'd, they appear'd but weak and trifling. Christianity has hitherto stood its ground against all attempts to discredit it; and in its infancy, triumph't over the combined efforts not only of Wit, and Malice, but of subtlety, and Learning, Bigotry, and Persecution. So that we need not call in the aid of the Civil Magistrate to suppress, or punish, the late attacks that have been made upon it, (or may be renewed) by studious *Sophists*, or blundering *Buffoons*. The more it is oppos'd, it will still be the more firmly establish't: and every objection that is made against it will, in the end, become an Evidence of its truth. Tho in so much discourse as we have had to-day, it is likely I may have used such warm and unguarded expressions as may lead you to suspect me of entertaining ill will or revenge against Mr. W, I assure you, Gentlemen, I always retain a sincere and hearty benevolence towards all mankind. And the worst that I wish to him, is, that he may live long enough in health and happiness to see, that he, and his late Friend Mr. C, have by their Writings *undesignedly* contributed very much towards distinguishing and pointing-out the genuine proofs and doctrines of Christianity; and demonstrating the truth of them. Without pretending to prophesy, I may venture to foretel that this will soon appear to be the effect of their Labours: and I heartily wish that it may rather be a pleasure, than a mortification, to him to perceive it.

T. Be pleased to sit down, Gentlemen. I SECT. VI. know you will both prefer this plain friendly Collation, to a Feast. Sir.....

S E C T. VI.

M. **C**OME Mr. N. the debate between Disc. 6. p. 4. us has hitherto been of a diffusive nature: let us now reduce the Controversy into a narrow compass: and let it turn intirely upon the *Resurrection* of *Jesus*; which is the grand Miracle, and Article of the christian Faith. If you can defend the truth of it against the *Rabbi's* objections; Jews and Infidels must acknowledge *Jesus* to be *the Messiah*; sent from Heaven to declare the will of God to mankind: Otherwise he must pass for an Impostor, or false Prophet.

N. The resurrection of *Jesus* is a fundamental Article of the christian Faith; a grand Miracle; and the accomplishment of a plain unquestionable Prophecy. With this miracle the truth of Christianity must stand or fall. So that too great stress can *scarce* be laid upon it. If *Jesus* truly rose from the dead, according to his own express Prediction; this must have been the fullest attestation that cou'd possibly be given to the integrity of his Conduct, and the truth of his Doctrine. For it is not only *hard* Disc. 6. p. 5. but even *impossible*, to imagin *that God wou'd* 6. vouchsafe the favour of a miraculous resurrection to *Jesus*, if for any crime (as the Jews pretend) he deservedly suffered death. I cannot however but observe, that if the Almighty had not appointed the Resurrection and Ascension of *Jesus*

SECT. VI. as a † reward for his sufferings, and as a peculiar Honour, and mark of the divine Favour, beyond what any other Person ever received; there wou'd have been no necessity of his rising again from the dead, as a *testimony* that was wanted to the truth of his Doctrine. *Moses* gave the *Jews* most unquestionable Proofs of his divine Mission, tho he was not rais'd from the dead. So did *Elijah*. And if the resurrection of *Jesus* had not been expressly foretold, and appointed of God, it cou'd not have been necessary in order to confirm the truth of his Mission. This was sufficiently proved before by the many publick undoubted Miracles he wrought in his life-time: some of which were at least as great, evident, and unquestionable Proofs of his being sent from God, as his being raised to life on the third day after his crucifixion. I grant that his Resurrection was an additional testimony to his Doctrine: and so was every Miracle he wrought; and particularly his *Ascension* into Heaven. But in case Almighty God had thought fit not to raise *Jesus* from the dead; but only to have accomplish't the prophetick Promise that he made of *enduing* his Disciples with power from on high, to qualify them for propagating the Gospel throughout the world; I cannot but think that we shou'd still have had sufficient and undeniable Evidence of *Christ's* divine Mission: and that every unprejudiced Person must have received his Doctrine with the same firm assent, and full conviction of mind, that we do now.

M. This is such Doctrine as I never heard before. St. Paul says that *if Christ be not risen, then is your preaching vain: and your Faith is also vain.*

1 Cor. xv.

24. 45.

N. So say I. *Yea* and the Apostles *must have* been found *false witnesses* for God; because they testify'd of God, that he raised up Christ. So they preach't, and so we believe. Without dispute the Resurrection of *Jesus* is now become an essential and necessary part of the christian Faith: because his rising again was foretold by himself; and the accomplishment of his prophecy was testify'd by his Apostles; who saw him alive after his Resurrection, and had such *infallible proofs* of it, as they cou'd not possibly question nor resist. All I pretend is, that *Christ's* rising again, which we so firmly believe, was originally design'd more as a Reward to himself for his sufferings, and a token of the singular Honour and Glory that was bestow'd upon him as being *Heir of all things*; Lord of the Creation, and the Son of God; than as a Proof that was still *wanted* of his divine Mission and Authority. His own resurrection cou'd not prove this more evidently, than his raising others from the dead; and working many other Miracles no less astonishing: and afterwards enduing his Apostles with the Power of speaking Languages they had never learn't; and such other miraculous Gifts as were necessary to fit them for discharging the office in which he employed them. His *foretelling* his Resurrection, made it absolutely necessary for him to rise again: because if his prediction had not been accomplish't, he must have pass'd for a false Prophet. By this Prophecy he appeal'd to his resurrection as a farther proof of his divine Mission: but this appeal is what no Impostor wou'd have made. If *Jesus* had not been endued with supernatural Knowledge, as well as divine Power; if he had not had the utmost certainty that he shou'd be raised to life on the third day, he wou'd never have

Heb. i. 2, 3.
Phil. ii. 9, 11.
Rom. i. 3, 4.

SECT. VI. have put his credit upon an Event that it was  not in his power to accomplish. He had already acquired all the honour and veneration that was due to a true Prophet. And if he had been an Impostor who only deluded his Disciples and followers into the belief of his having wrought true Miracles; he wou'd have been content with passing for such a great Prophet as *Moses*, or *Elijah*; and not have risk't all his Reputation upon his rising again: which, if he had been a Deceiver, he must be sure wou'd never happen. *Mahomet* was not such a Fool as to talk of his rising from the dead; or to appeal to any miraculous event that shou'd happen after his death, for proving the truth of his mission and doctrine. No Impostor that has common-sense, can be supposed capable of such consummate folly. So that *Jesus's* foretelling his resurrection was a proof that he not only expected it himself; but was *sure* it wou'd happen.

M. It is likely that in the latter part of his life he had initiated his Apostles into the *mysteries* of his *practice*, as well as of his *doctrine*; and let them into the secret of his Miracles: and he might perhaps depend upon their faithfulness and good conduct in conveying away his body, and telling the world that he was risen from the dead.

N. You suppose then, that he desired this favour of them before he dyed: that they all readily agreed to it; and that they promised him faithfully to hazard their life in executing this unaccountable piece of Fraud; and to employ the remaining part of their days in propagating an useless, unprofitable, wicked lye.

M. Yes, I think he must have communicated this Project to them before he dyed; or at least to his three favourite Disciples, *Peter*, *James*,
and

and *John* ; and left them to bring the rest into it by degrees. SECT. VI.

N. But wou'd he who (as you suppose) had already obtain'd the reputation of a true Prophet by fraud, and tricks, and matchless subtlety ; and was sure of enjoying that Fame he had so dextrously acquired ; wou'd he, I say, part with it all at once, by imparting the secret of his Frauds and Impostures to those very men who valued and followed him, *only* as the true *Messiah*, that had it in his Power to raise them to Honour and worldly greatness? Wou'd a subtle Impostor chuse the most ignorant, dull, and simple sort of people to be confederates with him in executing the most difficult and hazardous Imposture? Cou'd such poor, timorous well-meaning Men hear of such a Proposal without feeling the utmost horror and indignation at the Author of it? What must they think of their Master, and his Conduct? How vilely wicked and contemptible must he have appear'd to them? How amazed must they have been at their folly, and stupidity, in being so long deluded, and imposed on by him? What cou'd they now love and value him for? You suppose that he whom they believed to be the *Messiah*, and the Son of God, appear'd now by his own Confession and Proposal, to be a Deceiver, and a false Prophet. They cou'd now have no hopes of Honour or Advantage by following him. All their ambitious views must end at once. You suppose that they were desired to undertake and carry on such a scheme of fraud, folly, and wickedness, as no mortal cou'd ever devise, or think practicable. They were to hazard their lives every day ; and to renounce all prospect of Honour, Advantage, and Pleasure, merely to promote the reputation of one
who

SECT. VI. who had grossly deceived them ; and whom they
 cou'd not but heartily despise, and abhor. This
 project (which you reckon so plausible, that you
 build your whole scheme of infidelity upon it)
 is so full of inconsistencies and contradictions,
 that I neither know where to begin, nor how to
 proceed, in order to lay them fully open. They
 are so glaring, and in every view, croud in so
 fast upon us, that we are quite lost and bewil-
 der'd in astonishment at the number and variety
 of those gross absurditys that continually rise to
 our thoughts. This is the real state of my
 mind, every time I think of your incredible
 supposition of Fraud in the Resurrection of
Jesus.

M. Hold, Sir, you are not now in your pul-
 pit : and must not think to *harangue us with your*
noise and nonsense. Mere assertions prove no-
 thing one way or other. Let us proceed to ar-
 gument and proof. And since the Jewish *Rabbi*
 is not here, to vindicate his objections ; I'll do
 Disc. 6. p. 6. it for him as well as I can : and *from the very*
circumstances of the evangelical Story of Jesus's Re-
surrection, I'll prove it to have been the most
barefac'd imposture that ever was put upon the
world.

N. Seeing your objections are founded on the
 circumstances of the evangelical Story ; before
 you enter upon them, give me leave to point
 out some Circumstances that I think are neces-
 sary to set the Evidence we have for the truth of
Christ's resurrection in a clear and full light.

M. You may spare all that trouble. Every-
 one knows the Storys that the Evangelists tell us
 of Apparitions and Angels, and the *idle tales*
 which the frighten'd women told the Apostles.
 You need not be at the pains to prove that they
 cou'd not be deceived themselves. To shorten
 our

our dispute, I'll grant this: and shall insist only upon one short plain argument to prove that they deliberately conspired to deceive the world into the belief of *Jesus's* resurrection.

N. I did not design to explain at large, the nature and sufficiency of the Evidence we have for that important article of the christian Faith. The Circumstances that I now insist upon, are the conduct of *Jesus* before his death; and the behaviour of his Apostles after he was crucify'd.

M. Be short then; and don't preach: for it grows late: and I shall be apt to fall asleep.

N. I'll be as brief as I can. I observed before, that *Jesus's* foretelling his Resurrection was alone a sufficient proof that he himself believ'd, and was assured, it wou'd happen: otherwise he wou'd not have risk't the reputation he had acquired, upon an Event that it cou'd not be in his power to secure. I shewed you that to imagine he wou'd propose to his Apostles the vile imposture which you charge them with, is attended with insuperable difficultys, and endless absurditys: and that if such a proposal had been made to them, it is morally impossible that all (or indeed any) of them shou'd have resolved to comply with it; or attempt the execution of it. Besides; if *Jesus* had rely'd on their subtlety, steddyness and conduct in carrying on the Fraud you suspect; he wou'd never have talk't to them of his *rising again* the third day; as he often did: nor of his *coming again* to them. Such declarations are altogether inconsistent with any scheme of Fraud.

Joh. xiv. 3.
18, 19, 28.

M. His talking of these things was necessary to deceive the world; and to make the *Jews* believe that he wou'd really rise again from the dead: but to his disciples he explain'd all his Parables and Mysterys in private.

N. But

SECT. VI.

 N. But if he had been an Impostor, and consequently sure that he cou'd not possibly rise again, he wou'd never have spoken of any such thing; not even to his Disciples; and far less to the *Jews*. He cou'd not but know that his foretelling his resurrection, as he did, in the plainnest manner, must alarm his Enemys; put the Chief-priests and Pharisees upon their guard; and oblige them to take the measures they did to prevent that imposture of a false resurrection, which you suppose he had in view, and they were apprehensive of. Hence it appears, that his foretelling he shou'd rise again, was the greatest proof he cou'd possibly give of his Integrity. It was plainly bidding the Priests and Pharisees defiance; and telling them that all their spite, subtlety and watchfulness, wou'd not be able to hinder the accomplishment of his Prophecy. It is incredible that an Impostor shou'd act thus: because it was the plain and sure way to frustrate his own design. Had *Jesus* been a Deceiver who depended intirely on the folly and wickedness of his Disciples for carrying on a cheat in his pretended resurrection; he wou'd never have given the least intimation to the *Jews* beforehand, that he was to rise from the dead: nor even to his Disciples. Instead of telling them that he wou'd rise again, he must have told them that he had not the least hopes of it; but depended intirely upon their stealing away his body; and deceiving the world with a false report of his being risen to life. It is evident therefore, that the supposition of an *imposture* can never account for *Jesus's* foretelling his Resurrection.

M. But *Enthusiasm* will. Perhaps his imagination was over-heated: and by talking strange things of his being the *Messiah* and the son of God,

God, come from Heaven; he might work himself into some sort of belief, or expectation, that he shou'd really rise again. Enthusiasts often fancy that they have divine communications and inward lights: and their dreams and visions pass with them for realitys.

N. Your Schemes are ever attended with inconsistencies and self-contradiction. Enthusiasm, and Imposture, are incompatible in the same Person. The *Enthusiast* is sincere: he is only deceived; and mistake's the extravagant flights and whims of his disorder'd Brain, or warm Imagination, for divine lights and impulses: while the *Impostor* cannot but be conscious of his Deceit and wickedness. He is not mistaken himself; but intends to deceive others: and he certainly knows that he is false and wicked. You suppose that *Jesus* was not really endued with a divine power; but by subtlety and fraud deluded the world into the belief of his doing the greatest Miracles. And if this had been the case, he must have been an Impostor. An Enthusiast cou'd neither work *real* miracles; nor *false* ones. And if you think him an Impostor, conscious of fraud, and the vilest practices, he cou'd not at the same time be an Enthusiast; nor entertain any hopes of being rais'd from the dead, by that divine power to which you suppose he falsely pretended. Besides your fancying him to be an Enthusiast as to the hopes of a real Resurrection, cou'd account only for his *foretelling* it; but not for the *accomplishment* of that surprizing prophecy.

M. That was owing to the conduct and good management of his Disciples. Enthusiasm led *Jesus* into that prediction: and his Apostles took care to fulfil it: I mean to make the world believe that it was truly fulfill'd.

N. No

SECT. VI.

 *N.* No thing cou'd be more contrary to the character of *Jesus*, than *Enthusiasm*. Throughout his Conduct, and his Discourses, there appears the greatest Wisdom and Discretion, Truth, Consistency, Sedateness, calm and close reasoning, well-govern'd Passions; and every thing that is the reverse of *Enthusiasm*. All his behaviour, his Doctrine, and his miracles shew'd that he was endued with great Prudence, perfect Goodness; a supernatural Knowledge, and divine Power. These enabled him to foretel his resurrection: and the punctual accomplishment of his *Prophecy* shew'd that it flow'd from the divine wisdom. The Apostles cou'd not possibly do any thing towards it. They expected the resurrection of *Jesus* as little; and disbeliev'd it at first as obstinately, as the *Pharisees* themselves. And after having had the utmost assurance that cou'd possibly be given them of *Christ's* being risen from the dead, they declar'd this truth to the world. In this they cou'd not possibly be mistaken. You will not charge *them* with *Enthusiasm* too; and suppose that they only *fancied* they saw *Jesus* after his rising again; and sometimes *dreamt altogether* that they convers'd with him, at the same time.

M. No, no. I verily believe they were not *Enthusiasts*. They had the use of their senses as well as other men; and never saw their Master, after they stole away his Body, and bury'd it in the ground: but feign'd all the stories in the Gospels, of his appearing to them after his pretended resurrection.

N. Never were any Set of men more unlikely to form such a wild Project; nor more unfit for executing it. *Peter* seems to have been a Man of the warmest temper, and the most active enterprizing genius among them; but he

was more forward in resolving well, than steddily in performing his good resolutions. He assured *Jesus* that he wou'd sooner *dye* than *forsake* him. And all the rest promised as *fair* as he. Mat. xxvi. 35. Yet this bold resolute Man was frighten'd out of his wits by a *woman's* asking him a harmless question: and deny'd his Master again and again. And the other Disciples, instead of staying with *Jesus* to bear him testimony, if there had been occasion for it, or being ready to dye with him as they promised; all forsook him and fled, as soon as he was seized. Ver. 56. Is it likely now, is it possible, that such weak, timorous, irresolute men as these, who after the most solemn promises of fidelity and resolution, forsook their Master, at the very first, and most distant appearance of danger, before he was condemned; is it likely, I say, or possible, that after they saw him crucify'd, and all their hopes from him at once cut-off, they shou'd resolve upon the most foolish, hazardous, and desperate attempt that ever enter'd into the mind of Man; to steal away the body of *Jesus* while it was watch't and defended by a guard of Soldiers; and give-out that he was risen from the dead? Cou'd they value him more when he was dead, than they did while he was alive? Cou'd his death animate them with resolution and courage; and make them unanimous in hazarding their lives to execute a mad wicked project; in which they cou'd have no prospect either of success, safety, honour, or profit? No thing in nature can be more improbable, and absurd, than such suppositions.

M. It was the only game they had now to play. They were resolved perhaps that the world shou'd not know how much they were disappointed of their expectations. And since

SECT. VI. *Jesus* had given out that he wou'd rise again; they might agree to make the world believe that he really did so.

N. Such a wicked contrivance is quite inconsistent with their Character, their Views, and their Conduct, both before and after the women came to them with the news of *Christ's* being risen. But when do you think this strange Fraud was concerted.

M. As soon as *Jesus* was bury'd.

N. They cou'd not meet together till the next day at soonest. They forsook *Jesus* and fled, as soon as he was taken. And seeing they were well known at *Jerusalem*, and perhaps suspected by some of the Rulers and Priests of having a design to steal away their Master's body; they dared not venture to appear openly on the Feast-day: but must have met together in the most secret manner the night after; when you suppose the fraud was executed. This is the soonest that they cou'd have met. But considering their Fears, Cowardice, and dejection of Mind on this occasion, it is not probable that they met together till *Peter* and *John* heard from *Mary*, that *Jesus* was risen. But supposing that they assembled together the evening after the Passover; and that the fraud of stealing away the body of *Jesus* was then to be concerted: is it credible that such poor, artless, well meaning Men shou'd contrive or attempt such an imposture? Before this time, they gave sufficient proofs indeed of their ignorance, weakness, and slowness of apprehension; but there appears no reason to suspect their Virtue and Integrity. We cannot conceive it possible that men of *their* Character, and slender abilities, shou'd so suddenly change all their Views and Conduct; abandon Truth, Honour and Pro-

bity; and contrive a senseless, wicked, dangerous Imposture. SECT. VI.

M. When people are at a plunge, they will attempt the most absurd and seemingly impracticable things. The Apostles had not time to weigh and consider things fully. The Proposal might appear somewhat plausible at first view. And since they had not leisure for much deliberation, they might come into it rashly: and meeting with success in their first Attempt, they were the more encouraged afterwards to go on.

N. We must not proceed too fast. It will be time enough to talk of *success*, when the Project appears to be *possible*. Let me ask you whom you fancy to have been the first devyser of this fraud?

M. I cannot tell which of them it was. *Peter* seems to have been the boldest. He cou'd curse and swear like a Trooper. And his denying *Jesus* thrice, shows that he was capable of any thing. Disc. 6. p. 21.

N. He had shown such shameful cowardice and falshood in denying his Master, while he thought him capable of defending himself and his Disciples from danger; that he cou'd not offer such a shocking proposal to the rest now, when *Jesus* was *dead*; and that they had no longer any hopes from him. He cou'd not expect that any one of them wou'd bear the thoughts of such a base ridiculous Imposture: He found by experience that he cou'd not depend upon himself, and his-own Steddynefs, even in doing his duty, when there was little or no danger to discourage him from it: and therefore he cou'd not possibly rely upon the courage, secrecy, and resolute wickedness of those whom he knew to be as weak and timorous as himself; and unacquainted

SECT. VI. acquainted with the arts of Fraud, and Hypocrisy.

~~~~~ Besides, if the imposture of stealing away *Christ's* body cou'd have appear'd feasible to him; he cou'd not have had the Boldness to propose it. He must have feared (and been assured) that one or other of the Disciples wou'd have gone and discover'd it to the Chief-Priests and Pharisees; and have been glad of such a favourable opportunity to secure themselves from the danger they now dreaded; and to procure Honour and Advantage by disclosing the Fraud. Common Honesty, Self-preservation, Interest, and Duty, must have led them to it. So that *Peter*, or whoever else you may imagin was to contrive and propose the Imposture, cou'd not but foresee it wou'd be discover'd some time or other. And the dread of its being disclosed by some of the Disciples before he cou'd escape from Justice, must have deterr'd him from communicating such a wicked Project to them; if he himself were supposed base and foolish enough to devyse it. And yet Infidels who reject the most credible and best-attested Facts, can believe that this impracticable hazardous project was readily acquiesced in by all the Apostles; and executed successfully before they parted. I cannot conceive any thing more extravagant and incredible than this. Indeed the Supposition is morally impossible.

*M.* I don't well know what you mean by a thing's being *morally* impossible. If it was *possible* at all; that is enough. I shall afterwards prove that it must have been actually true.

*N.* A thing is *morally impossible* when it is altogether inconsistent with the Principles, Notions, Views, and Motives that influence moral Agents; and help to determin them as to the nature, manner, and circumstances of their ac-

tions. Thus it is morally impossible for a *wife* Man to act often like a *Fool*; and deliberately to do the most absurd and extravagant things: or for any man, while he continues in his Senses, to murder himself, or his neighbour, in cool blood, without the least Provocation, Passion, or any prospect of ease, or advantage. It is morally impossible that the same kind of Madness shou'd at the same time seize several persons; and show itself in the same manner, by a series of regular (but extravagant) actions. For instance, it is morally impossible that our twelve Judges shou'd agree to dance together publicly at Court, the next Birth-night; or to go to the Play-house together in their Robes: or that half our Bishops shou'd go and try whether they cou'd convert the *Pope* and *Cardinals*; and establish the Protestant Religion in *Italy*. It is morally impossible that a number of People, without any view of Interest, or Pleasure, shou'd combine together to impose upon the world, by false reports: or that we shou'd be deceived in relying upon the testimony of credible Persons, who solemnly declare they saw or heard the things they relate to us. Thus it is morally impossible we shou'd be deceived in believing that there are such *Islands* (or *Countrys* at least) as *Japan*, *Borneo*, and *California*: that *Julius Cæsar* was murder'd in the Senate: that *Jesus* was crucify'd at *Jerusalem* in the reign of *Tiberius*; and that his Apostles testify'd his resurrection, and made numerous Converts at *Rome*, and throughout several parts of the Roman Empire soon after: that St. *Paul* and *Pliny* wrote the *Epistles* that pass under their names: that *William* the Conqueror reign'd in *England*: and that King *Charles* the first was beheaded before his own Palace: tho, by the way, there is not now

SECT. VI. greater Evidence for the truth of this last and late Fact, than there is for the resurrection of *Jesus*. Once more: seeing all men have a natural and invincible desire of Happiness; whether they place it chiefly in the enjoyment of Honour, Power, Pleasure, or Wealth; or in the pursuit and practice of Truth and Virtue: it is morally impossible that any twelve Men shou'd agree together to renounce all prospect of the common Means of Happiness; and employ their life in preaching, and seemingly practising Justice, Charity, Candour, Temperance, and every thing that is good, and virtuous; while at the same time they really and industriously propagate what they know to be a wicked Imposture; and yet expect Opposition, Contempt, Disgrace, Persecution, dayly Toils and Hazards, and at last Death itself, as the *only* reward of all their Labours. This is not only *morally* impossible; but as *naturally* impossible as that the heaviest Bodys shou'd move without any impulse: or that the most surprizing Effects shou'd be produced without a sufficient Cause. When twelve *Quakers* travel through *Spain* and *Italy* to propagate their notions of Religion; and publickly preach against Popish Idolatry and Superstition, in the streets of *Rome*, or *Madrid*; I shall grant that Enthusiasm is capable of leading Men to the most absurd and hazardous Attempts. But even *this* wou'd not prove that it is so much as *possible*, for any Set of Men whatever, to run the same hazards in order to propagate what they *know* to be a vile *imposture*; while they have no view of Honour, Pleasure, or Profit in the Success of it. This is so contrary to all the experience and notions we have; and to all the Views, Passions, and

. Workings,



Workings of human-nature ; that we cannot but conclude it to be *absolutely* impossible. SECT. VI.

T. Did not *Mabomet* devylc and carry on such an Imposture?

N. Not without the fairest views of Interest and Advantage. He had not only the *prospect* but the \* *possession* of *power*, *credit*, and the most brutish heights of criminal *pleasure* in the gradual success of his Imposture. He met with the most ignorant credulous people ; who had scarce any sense at all of Religion ; and were therefore the more easily prevail'd on to follow him with the most implicate obedience. He taught such doctrine as was exactly suited to the warlike Temper and lustful Inclinations of those he seduced. He wrought no Miracles ; nor pretended to work any. His followers took his word for his journey to Heaven one night upon a Beast ; and the Angel *Gabriel's* attending him thither with seventy pair of wings : and they believed that, in every Fit he had of the Falling-sickness, *that* Angel came to him with a new revelation. When he was blamed for his Polygamy, Adultery, and Lyes ; he still framed a new Chapter of his *Alcoran* to vindicate his Conduct ; and pretended a warrant from Heaven for all his wickedness. He run no other hazard by promoting his Fictions, than any-one must do who proposes Dominion and Conquest over others, and the enjoyment of the most immoral and infamous Pleasures, as the chief aim of his actions. None were so much exposed to danger as those who opposed him. His notions were spread at first by the most subtle Address, and afterwards by the utmost Force and Violence. And conquest over his Enemys, was own'd to be

See Dean *Prideaux's* Life of *Mahomet.*

SECT. VI. the most convincing Proof he cou'd give of his Doctrine. The Character and Conduct of *Jesus* and his Disciples were in all respects as contrary to *Mahomet's*, as light is to darkness; Virtue, to Vice; and Truth, to Imposture. They patiently bore the most unjust reproaches and injurious treatment. They lived contentedly under poverty, disgrace, persecution, and continual afflictions. St. *Paul* tells us that he and the other Apostles suffered *bunger and nakedness*, 2 Cor. xi. 27. *stripes and imprisonment*; and *dayly perils, necessities and distresses*. Ch. vi. 4, 5. Under these, no thing cou'd possibly have supported them but the testimony of their Conscience; and the assured hopes of endless Glory and Happiness in Heaven, which *Jesus* promised them as the reward of their faithful and *patient continuance in well doing*. Hitherto then it does not so much as appear possible that any Set of Men, however wicked they were, if they be allowed any share of common-sense, shou'd undertake such an imposture as you charge upon the Apostles.

M. The Project was very hazardous, difficult, and discouraging; and what we cou'd not suppose they wou'd have undertaken, if we had not sufficient Proof of it from subsequent Facts.

N. We shall consider your proof afterwards. Let us first observe their Conduct after the death of *Jesus*; and see whether *that* gives any reason to suspect their having concerted any Fraud as to his resurrection. When he was crucify'd they seem to have been in the most destitute dejected condition. On the first day of the week, Joh. xx. 19. they were assembled together secretly for fear of the *Jews*. What was the subject of their consultation does not appear; but it seems *they* mourn'd together, and wept, when the women brought them the news of *Christ's* resurrection: and

Mark xvi.  
10.

and so little did they expect it; that they wou'd scarce believe their-own eyes, when he appeared to them, as they sat together at meat. Is there any thing in this part of their behaviour, that looks like Artifice or Fraud? If they had stole away the body of *Jesus*, and design'd to deceive the world into the belief of his resurrection; they wou'd not have shown themselves so backward to believe it. They wou'd rather have been ready to confirm the women, and every other person in their mistake. They must have seem'd to *expect* it; and have shown the utmost joy and satisfaction when they first heard the welcome news. They wou'd have told the women that this was what *Jesus* declared to them often before his death; what the Scriptures foretold; and that they were sure the Almighty wou'd *not suffer his Holy-one to see corruption.* But instead of this, the Apostles look't on the women's words as no better than *idle tales*; and did not believe them.

SECT. VI.  
Luk. xxiv.  
11.  
Mark xvi.  
14.

Psal. xvi. 10.

*M.* This was nothing but sham, and refined policy, to carry on their Fraud the more successfully; and prevent the discovery of it. They seem indeed to have carry'd things too far, when they pretended to grieve and mourn, as if they had no hopes of *Christ's* rising again: and afterwards to disbelieve the very thing that they were to publish to the world. But it is common for Hypocrites to discover themselves by over-acting their part.

*N.* There is a great difference betwixt Hypocrites' *over-acting* a part; and their acting the very *reverse* to what their part requires; as you must suppose the Apostles to have done in the present case. Their conduct was altogether inconsistent with your Supposition of Fraud. If they had stole the body of *Jesus*, and design'd

SECT. VI. sign'd to propagate the belief of his being risen;  they themselves wou'd not have been the first to doubt of it: and when it was reported to them by others, who saw him, they wou'd not have disbelieved it still, with a surprizing degree of obstinacy. There cou'd be no room for acting such an inconsistent part as you suppose they did; nor the least pretence for seeming to doubt of a Fact which you fancy they *then* design'd, (and must have wish't) to make others believe. The thing was in itself highly probable even before they heard of it from the Women. They had seen *Jesus* raise the dead; and had heard him declare plainly that he shou'd rise on the third day after his death: and therefore when they found that his Body was gone from the Sepulchre, they ought to have concluded that he was certainly risen, according to his own prediction. They had seen other of his Prophecys punctually fulfill'd: so that they ought firmly to have believ'd that his prophecy concerning his rising again wou'd likewise be verified. No thing but dulness, inattention, sorrow, despair, and dejection of Spirit cou'd have led them to doubt of it! But certainly if they had *then* design'd to make others believe that *Jesus* was risen; they themselves wou'd never have *pretended* to question it; but wou'd have industriously confirm'd the Faith, (or, as you reckon it, the mistake and delusion) of the women who *first* reported it. Besides, upon the supposition of Fraud, it is impossible to account for the women's receiving the first news of the Resurrection. Had it come from the Apostles, or any one of them, there might have been some slender pretence (tho no just reason) for suspecting Fraud in the case. And indeed if there had been any Fraud; they themselves must first have



have spread about the news of *Christ's* being risen. But on the contrary the matter was first declared in a miraculous manner to the women who came early in the morning to the sepulchre to anoint and embalm the body of *Jesus*. There they saw an Angel, whose countenance was like lightning, and his garments shining, and white as snow. And when the women were affrighted, the Angel said to them, "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here; but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in *Galilee*; saying, the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful Men; and be crucify'd, and the third day rise again." This Fact, confirm'd by the terror, and flight, (and testimony) of the Souldiers who watch't the Sepulchre, when they felt an Earthquake, and saw one in a glorious Form roll away the Stone from the door of it; sufficiently proves the truth of *Christ's* resurrection; and removes all suspicion of Fraud from the Apostles.

M. I'm surprized that you shou'd argue so long against the *possibility* of a Fraud that can be evidently *proved*. By the testimony of *Matthew* it appears that the Chief-priests were apprehensive of an imposture; and took the most prudent measures they cou'd to prevent it. They apply'd themselves to *Pilate* in a Speech wherein they plainly allude to a former *imposture* of *Jesus*; which cou'd be no other than that which they had discovered in the pretended resurrection of *Lazarus*. Instead of the *last Error*, as it is in your translation, it shou'd be the last *imposture* will be worse than the first. If the Rabbi's criticism, and application be just and true, the consequence is, that the resurrections of *Jesus* and *Lazarus* are both impostures.

N. Your

SECT. VI.

Mat. xxviii.

Luke xxiv.

4.

Ver. 5, 6, 7.

Mat. xxviii.

4.

See Ver. 11.

Ver. 2.

Disc. 6. p. 9.

ib. p. 42.

SECT. VI. N. Your Argument I think is this. If by *πλάνη* the Chief-priests meant *deceit* or *imposture*; (which, to please you, I'll at present suppose they did;) and pointed at the resurrection of *Lazarus* as a *former* imposture that *Jesus* had been guilty of; then the consequence is, that the resurrections of *Jesus* and *Lazarus* are both impostures. What a surprizing blunder is this! Without the help of this trifling criticism, and a precarious guessing at what the Chief-priests meant by *πλάνη*; you might by the same way of reasoning, prove that *Jesus* was not only a *Deceiver* or *Impostor*; but in a confederacy with Devils: for the Priests and Pharisees manifestly charged him with this too. And your Friend's Argument supposes that their *saying* so was a sufficient *proof* of it. But if the Chief-priests without any dark hint, or ambiguous expression, had told *Pilate* in plain terms that *Jesus* had been guilty of a vile imposture in his pretended raising of *Lazarus*; and that therefore it was necessary to set a guard at his Sepulchre to hinder his Disciples from stealing his body away, and saying that he was risen; lest *this last imposture* (if it succeeded) shou'd be worse than the first: wou'd this have proved *Jesus* or his Disciples to be guilty of what the Chief-priests laid to their charge? If they had known, or suspected any fraud in the raising of *Lazarus*, we may be sure they wou'd not have minced the matter, nor been content with giving *Pilate* a distant hint of their meaning. They wou'd have spoke out their mind in the plainest terms. The truth is, they had not the least suspicion of any Fraud in the case of *Lazarus*; as I proved sufficiently before. By *πλάνη* they meant the *delusion* of the People: and told *Pilate* that if the Disciples shou'd steal away their Master's body,

dy, and say he was risen from the dead, the last SECT. VI.  
*delusion* of the people after this pretended resur-  
 rection, wou'd be greater, or *worse*, than the  
*former*. The Pharisees and their Followers had  
 charg'd him before this, with *deluding* or sedu-  
 cing the people; ἀλλὰ πλανᾷ τὸν ὄχλον. And Joh. vii. 12.  
 this is all that the Chief-priests meant by πλάνη  
 in their address to *Pilate*. They were afraid that  
 the people wou'd be more strongly influenced,  
 (or as they call'd it, *deluded*) by the belief of  
 his Resurrection, than they were by the Miracles  
 he wrought in his life-time: or, in other words,  
 that *the last delusion* [of the people] wou'd be  
*worse than the first*. But if it cou'd be proved  
 that the Chief-Priests pointed at the resurrection  
 of *Lazarus*; and meant to call *that* an *imposture*;  
 this wou'd only show that they were spiteful e-  
 nough to load *Jesus* with the most malicious re-  
 proaches. As for the Consequence that Mr. *W.*  
 draws from the *Rabbi's* application of πλάνη to Disc. 6. p. 42.  
 the raising of *Lazarus*, (supposing the Criticism  
 to be right) it is one of the grossest blunders he  
 ever made. I need not expose it farther. You  
 yourself must now perceive the absurdity of it.

*M.* This is but an incidental remark that does  
 not affect the *Rabbi's* main proof of Fraud ta-  
 ken from the secret breaking of the Seals put on  
 the Stone of the Sepulchre. The *Jews* cou'd Disc. 6. p. 10.  
 not possibly devyse a better security against Fraud  
 than what they took. They sealed the Stone at  
 the mouth of the Sepulchre; and placed a guard  
 of Souldiers about it.

*N.* The placing a guard at the door of the  
 Sepulchre was an effectual security both against  
 Fraud and Violence. But the sealing of the  
 Stone cou'd be of no service.

*N.* What

SECT. VI.



*M.* What better security cou'd possibly be devysed for preventing or detecting any Fraud, than sealing the Stone?

*N.* It cou'd be no security at all: because if *Jesus* really rose early on the third day, he cou'd not come out of the Sepulchre without breaking the Seals. And since they must have been broken in case of an early resurrection; it is absurd to make that a proof of Fraud, or a security against it, which must unavoidably have happen'd in case *Jesus* really rose sooner than the Chief-priests expected he wou'd.

Disc. 6. p.  
11.

*M.* But this *early* rising is the very thing that the *Rabbi* insists upon as a sufficient Proof of Fraud. The Chief-priests carefully seal'd the Stone of the Sepulchre; which they design'd to be present at the opening of, on the third day, the time appointed by himself for his resurrection; and then to give ample satisfaction to the people, either that he was really risen, or that there cou'd be no resurrection of his Body. But notwithstanding this precaution in sealing of the Stone, *Jesus's* body was privately slipt off early in the morning of the day before; and a resurrection was pretended by his Disciples. And yet you wou'd have people believe there was no fraud in the Case; tho confessedly none of the Sealers of the Sepulchre were present: who can believe it? Can there be any imposture more against Sense and Reason palm'd upon the understandings of mankind? You may as well say, when a sealed Closet is broken open and the Treasure gone, without the Privy of the Signators, that there is no wrong done; as that in the resurrection of *Jesus* there was no fraud. The Cases are equal and parallel.

Disc. 6. p.  
17.

*N.* If the Signators had a right to the Closet, or the Treasure; it cou'd not be open'd by other



ther hands without some suspicion of Fraud. SECT. VI.  
 But if it was arbitrarily seal'd; it might be warrantably open'd by the owner of the Treasure; or by one that had an authority superior to the Signator's: which was the Case in the resurrection of *Jesus*. The Chief-priests had no right to the Sepulchre; nor to seal it up. The treasure in it belonged to *Jesus*; who was under no obligation to regard their arbitrary act; but might freely break their Seals, and come out of the Sepulchre at any hour he pleased on the third day. He acted by an Authority far superior to that of *Pilate* or the Chief-priests. And to pretend that his breaking their Seals was unjustifiable, or a proof of fraud, is highly absurd. If *Jesus* really rose from the dead; who must have raised him?

*M.* None cou'd do it but God.

*N.* Might not God raise him to life at any hour of the third day that he thought proper?

*M.* Doubtless.

*N.* If God then raised up *Jesus* very early on the third day; was he not at liberty to come out of the Sepulchre as soon as his life was restored?

*M.* I think not. He shou'd have waited till the proper time that the Chief-priests and Rulers cou'd conveniently come to the Sepulchre, and be present at the opening of the Seals. If they had trespass't upon his patience; or had been Disc. 6. p. for confining him longer than was meet according to prophecy; then his resurrection without their presence had been excusable and justifiable. But his pretended rising to life, not only a day before the Chief-priests cou'd imagin he wou'd, or earlier in the morning than he shou'd for their requisite presence, together with the fracture of the Seals against the law of security, is such a manifest and indisputable mark and.

SECT. VI. and indication of fraud, as is not to be equall'd in all or any of the impostures that ever were attempted to be put upon the world.

N. Are you sure that *Jesus* knew of the Chief-priests' having seal'd his Sepulchre; or any thing else that they did or design'd, after his death? Whatever others may believe, the *Rabbi*, and you cannot suppose that he knew any thing that was transacted betwixt his death, and his resurrection. So that to talk of his being obliged to wait in the Sepulchre till the Chief-priests shou'd come and be present at his rising to life, is just such another blunder as the consequence that Mr. *W.* drew from the *Rabbi's* criticism.

M. I did not think that an orthodox Divine cou'd doubt whether *Jesus* knew that the Chief-priests seal'd his Sepulchre, and design'd to be present at the opening of it. Don't you believe that *Jesus* is an omniscient divine Person? If he knew all things; he knew what was done after his death, as well as if he had been still alive.

N. The question at present is not what I believe; nor whether *Jesus* be so united to Almighty God, as that he may in virtue of that union, be properly called *God*, or one Being with the *Father*: but whether you can consistently argue upon any supposition or concession made by Christians, in order to prove or establish a Consequence that is the very reverse of such a concession. If you suppose *Jesus* to be omniscient, and a divine Being, you cannot at the same time deny him to be a good and a righteous person.

M. Whatever my opinion of *Jesus* may be, you must allow me to argue *ad hominem*. If you grant him to be at all times omniscient, or a truly divine person; I may argue upon this concession, without being obliged to suppose  
the

the truth of it; or to admit the Consequences SECT. VI. that necessarily flow from it. The question then  is, whether you grant that *Jesus* was omniscient; or knew whatever was done on earth, during the intermediate state betwixt his death, and his resurrection. I thought that his omniscience had been reckon'd a fundamental point of *orthodoxy*.

N. We must distinguish betwixt the *plain, necessary, undoubted* doctrines of the christian Religion, that are *expressly* contain'd in Scripture; and the many *intricate, needless*, and sometimes *doubtful* consequences that are drawn from such Scripture-truths: Of which Consequences the several *Creeds, Articles, and Confessions* of different Churches are generally compos'd. Every Christian will readily believe whatever he finds to be plainly and expressly contain'd in the Word of God: and other Points ought not to be impos'd upon the Consciences of any. Propositions and Consequences fairly drawn from Scripture-truths, will always be received by those who perceive and own them to be *just, clear, and necessary* Consequences: but they ought not to be impos'd on such as doubt of them. Such Consequences, strictly speaking, cannot be points of *Faith*; tho they were inforced by the highest human Authority: they are rather points of *reason* and *logick*. And tho they are sometimes enjoyn'd or impos'd as terms of communion, and Articles of Peace; they ought never to be impos'd under pain of *damnation*; but only under the peril of *inconsistency* and *self-contradiction*. He who rejects, or doubts of an immediate necessary Consequence drawn from a plain Scripture-Proposition, argues ill: but I shall not for that reason pronounce him a *Heretick*; if he believe every thing that was *expressly* taught by *Christ* and his Apostles. Nor will I censure him for chusing rather

SECT. VI. *W*her to rest his Faith upon the unerring Word of God, than upon the critical skill and reasoning of fallible Men. And I claim the same liberty of judging for myself, that I allow to others. Supposing now I shou'd assert that the personal Union betwixt the *one God*, and the *Man Christ Jesus*, was superseded during his passion, or death at least; there cou'd be no heresy in such an Assertion. It account's better than any other notion, for that puzzling exclamation of *Jesus* upon the Cross; "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" Now since this Supposition does not contradict any Scripture-truth, or necessary point of christian doctrine; I may safely deny that the Soul of *Jesus*, in its separate State, knew any thing of the Chief-priests' sealing his Sepulchre; or their designing to be present at the opening of it. And therefore I still insist upon it, that the *Rabbi's* argument about the breaking of the seals is a mere blunder. And since *Jesus* was at liberty to come out of the Sepulchre as soon as his life was restored; it is absurd to suppose that the breaking of the seals, (which in that case was unavoidable,) cou'd be any Proof, (or indeed raise the least *suspicion*,) of Fraud.

Disc. 6. p.  
12.

*M.* When the Chief-priests seal'd the Stone, they intended to be present, on the day appointed, at the opening of the Sepulchre; not doubting what no-body cou'd question, but *Jesus* wou'd wait their coming; and arise to life, if he cou'd, in the sight of themselves, and of a vast concourse of people that were sure to attend on them, to behold the miracle.

*N.* If the Chief-priests were so foolish as to think that Almighty God *ought* to have comply'd with their extravagant expectations; and to raise *Jesus* to life at the *precise* time that they



required; or that *Jesus* wou'd wait their leisure, SECT. VI. and stay in the Sepulchre after he was restor'd to life; they were grossly mistaken. Since *Jesus* cou'd not be supposed to know of their sealing the Stone, or their designing to be present at the opening of the Sepulchre; it was absurd in them to imagin that he shou'd have *vouchsafed* P. 12: *such a kind of resurrection* as the *Rabbi* talks of, in accommodation to the sealing of the Stone. And if he were supposed to have all their transactions betwixt his death and his resurrection, revealed to him afterwards; (which there is no reason to believe,) they cou'd not expect that he wou'd comply with their insolent demands, and wait in the Sepulchre like a Prisoner, till they shou'd give him leave to come out.

*M.* Tho he might not be strictly obliged to gratify their desires; it might be reasonable in them to expect that he wou'd. But he was so far from doing this, that his Body was gone be- Disc. 6. p. 14. times in the morning; before the Chief-priests cou'd be out of their beds: and a barefaced infringement of the seals was made against the laws of Honour and Honesty. If there had been a real resurrection, the Sealers of the Stone wou'd ib. p. 15. have been the openers of the Sepulchre. Wherefore else was the Stone sealed?

*N.* It cou'd only be design'd for an *After-game*: to serve as a Pretence for cavilling at the truth of the Resurrection; and for charging the Disciples with fraud in stealing the body of *Jesus* away. The Chief-priests cou'd not reasonably doubt of his rising again. Or if some of them question'd it; they cou'd not design the Seals for a bar against omnipotence; nor expect to confine Almighty God to their will and measures, as to the time, and manner of raising *Jesus* from the dead. When the *Rabbi* says that

SECT. VI. the breaking of the Seals was *against the Laws of Honour and Honesty*; he doth not consider against whom this blasphemous Charge is made. Was the sealing of the Sepulchre to be a check upon the Almighty? Was he to be confined to those measures that the Chief-priests prescribed to him? Or was *Jesus* obliged to rise to life exactly at the *hour* and time that *they* appointed? One wou'd think such assertions too bold and impious for a *Jew*, or any Infidel. If the Chief-priests meant the sealing of the Sepulchre as a declaration made beforehand that they wou'd not believe the resurrection of *Jesus*; unless God wou'd once more put him in their power, and leave him at their mercy, after he shou'd be raised; this is a request full as extravagant and foolish as their declaring they wou'd own him to be the *Messiah*, if he wou'd come down from the Cross. They had just as much reason to expect this, as that *Jesus* shou'd be kept in the sepulchre, till they shou'd come to sacrifice him a second time; which in all probability wou'd have been the effect of his waiting for the coming of the Chief-priests to see the sepulchre open'd.

M. If *Jesus* had appear'd to them alive at the opening of the Sepulchre, he wou'd have been so far from running the hazard of being murder'd, that his presence must have struck them all with an awful terror and astonishment; and have convinced them, and the whole nation, that he was truly the *Messiah*, or the *Son of God*.

N. Had he staid in the sepulchre till the Chief-priests came to open it; it wou'd have been easy for one of their Officers to strangle him, or knock him down secretly; and then to show his dead body to the people as a proof of his being an Impostor. Or if they had not murder'd

murder'd him in the sepulchre, they might have pretended that tho he was crucify'd, yet he did not truly *dye* ; but only fainted, and afterwards recover'd his Senses, as others do after swooning, without any Miracle : And therefore they wou'd have insisted upon his being more certainly put to death ; that there might be intire satisfaction given to the world, as to the reality of his resurrection. Or, seeing his great loss of blood during his sufferings and crucifixion, and the inconceivable agony and pain he endured, cou'd not but somewhat alter the features of his Face, and the aire of his Countenance ; the Priests, upon this remarkable alteration in his Aspect, might have pretended that he was not the same Person who was crucifyed ; but some Impostor that personated him to deceive the People. And they might have made this apprehension, or distrust, a pretence to justify their murdering him again, either immediately by the rage and violence of the mob ; or under the appearance and colour of Authority and Law. The obstinate unbelief, malice, and unjust Conduct of the Chief-priests and Pharisees towards *Jesus*, before his death, showed evidently, that if they had seen him after his resurrection ; the same Spite, Bigotry, and inveterate Prejudices against him would have continued ; and have still render'd them incapable of conviction. Seeing they imputed all the astonishing Miracles he wrought in his lifetime to a confederacy with Devils ; and were not convinced even by his raising *Lazarus* from the dead ; it could not be expected that their seeing *Jesus* himself after his rising again, wou'd have had greater influence upon their minds. It wou'd probably have had the effects I mention'd before ; and have led them

SECT. VI. to murder him either in the sepulchre; or under the Forms of Law, as they did before.

T. But if *Jesus* had been miraculously raised from the dead, he must have been arm'd with Omnipotence; and therefore cou'd easily have either resisted, or escaped, the rage of his Enemys: so that he cou'd have no reason to fear the utmost efforts of malice and violence.

N. Do you fancy that after his resurrection his body was invulnerable? Or can you think it reasonable that he shou'd either work miracles for forty days together, to avoid the rage of his implacable Enemys; or else be continually exposed to their malicious fury? Neither of these cou'd be expected. Miracles were not to be wrought without necessity; and never when common prudence, and using the natural means of self-preservation, wou'd do as well. He had given repeated and unquestionable Proofs of his divine Mission. To have wrought more miracles in hopes of convincing the Chief-priests, wou'd only have render'd them still more inexcusable; and have heighten'd their guilt and condemnation. By avoiding their malice therefore, *Jesus* not only consulted his own safety; but did an act of mercy and kindness to them. Wisdom too required this conduct. They who had resisted the powerful evidence of so many publick undoubted miracles as *Jesus* wrought for their conviction, cou'd not deserve to see new wonders; especially in such instances, and such a manner, as they required. It was inconsistent with the Honour, Authority and Wisdom, of Almighty God, to gratify such obstinate wicked people in their insolent demands. When *Jesus* was upon the Cross, “ the Chief-  
“ priests, with the Scribes and Elders, mock't  
“ him;”



“ him ; and said, he saved others, himself he cannot save. If he be the King of *Israel* [or the *Messiah*] let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God : let Him deliver him now, if He *like* (or \* *approve* of) him : for he said I am *the Son of God.*” The Rabbi had as much reason to call this an implicit Covenant betwixt God, and the Chief-priests ; as to suppose one betwixt them and the Apostles ; who had no more concern in the resurrection of *Jesus*, than the *Pharisees*. He might urge that the Almighty's consent was reasonably to be presum'd. Affixing *Jesus* to the Cross with nails, answer'd to their affixing their seals to the Sepulchre. The condition of the supposed Covenant was expressly mention'd. If *Jesus* was the *Son of God*, or the *Messiah*, he was to come down from the Cross : for that if God *approved* of him and his conduct, he wou'd now deliver him, and then they wou'd believe in him. But if he did not come down from the cross, but became subject to a State of mortality ; then he was to be accounted an Impostor. This demand of the Chief-priests was full as reasonable, as that *Jesus* shou'd, after his resurrection, be again left to their mercy. Their sealing the Stone cou'd be intended for no other purpose but for cavilling against the Miracle of his resurrection, (which they had all the reason in the world to expect ; ) and for calumniating the Apostles. The Chief-priests cou'd scarce be so impiously bold, as to defy omnipotence to rescue *Jesus* out of their hands. And yet his being *rescued* from them,

SECT. VI.

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Disc. 6. p.
15, 16,

Mat. xxvii.
49.

* This seems plainly to be the meaning of *ἰδέναι* in this place. In the same sense it is us'd by St. *Paul*, in *Rom. vii.* 15, 16, 19, 20.

SECT. VI. was as necessary as his *resurrection* itself. He was to *dye no more*; but to ascend into Heaven. His state of Humiliation and Suffering was over. And it was highly unreasonable to expect that he wou'd any more put himself in their power.

Disc. 6. p. 13. M. But the body of *Jesus* was gone from the Sepulchre early on Sunday morning; which was the day before *that* signified and predicted for his resurrection. This looks as if the Disciples had been afraid of trusting *Jesus's* body its full time in the grave; because of the greater difficulty to carry it off afterwards.

N. People of all nations reckon a *part* of a day or a year, for a *whole* one. So that since *Jesus* dyed on Friday, Sunday must certainly be the *third* day; on which he said he shou'd rise again. The two Disciples he met with on the very day of his resurrection, said that it was *then* the *third* day since his death. And we cannot doubt but they knew the usual way of reckoning days in their own Country. They were *Jews*; and in no other sense the *disciples* of *Jesus*, than his frequent hearers and followers were. Lok. xxiv. 21. V. 19—21. They look't upon him as a *Prophet mighty in word and deed, before God, and all the people, and trusted that it had been he which shou'd have redeem'd Israel*. As for your insinuation that the Apostles wou'd not leave *Jesus's* body its full time in the grave; it must now appear as groundless and absurd as your *reason* for charging them with this Fraud. *Jesus* rose exactly on the *third* day, according to his prediction. He cou'd not avoid breaking the Seals when he came out of the Sepulchre. He knew nothing of its being seal'd. And if he had; he wou'd not have regarded it. As to the precise time, or hour of his rising, he had no choice. The Almighty raised him up early in the morning, because

because it was contrary to Justice, Order, and SECT. VI. Wisdom, that *Jesus* shou'd be left any more to the cruel rage and malice of his Enemys. His resurrection was by his own prophecy fixt and determin'd to *the third day*: but the Chief-priests' sealing the Sepulchre, cou'd not confine nor limit omnipotent wisdom to such an hour of the day, as they thought proper.

M. If there were any doubt concerning *Jesus*'s meaning, when he said he shou'd rise again on *the third day*; it must be determin'd by his declaring that he was to be *three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.* Mat. xii. 40.

N. Since this doubtful expression was but once used, it is reasonable to explain it by the repeated declarations that *Jesus* made of his rising again on *the third day*. A natural or compleat day includes both *day* and *night*; and a broken day, which is but a part of *each*, or of *either*, is by general custom reckon'd for such a compleat or natural day. Now *Jesus* having dyed on Friday about three o'clock afternoon; the *first* day ended, and the *second*, (being the *Sabbath-day*) began, according to the jewish computation, at Sunsetting the same evening. The *third day* began in the evening of our Saturday, just when the jewish Sabbath ended. And seeing *Jesus* did not rise till the Sunday morning after; it is evident that he rose upon the *third* day. Now it appears from what the Chief-priests said to *Pilate*, that rising on *the third day* was the same thing as rising *after* (or *within*) *three days*. If by the *third* day they understood the *fourth*; or pretended to understand the words of *Jesus* in that sense, that they might have a pretence for cavilling about the time of his resurrection; we cannot answer for their wilful mistake. But it is highly probable that by the *third* day

Mat. xxvii.

63, 64.

Mar. viii.

31.

Joh. ii. 19.

SECT. VI. *day* they meant what we, and others, do. However, *Jesus* certainly knew his own meaning best. Now he told his Apostles on the same day that he rose, "thus it behoved *the Messiah* to suffer, and to rise from the dead, *the third day*." His true meaning appears plainly enough: and the corresponding event puts it beyond all dispute.

7 Xpist
Luk. xxiv.
46.
See Ver. 1,
& 7.

M. The body of *Jesus* was carry'd off in the dark; and was never seen any more by the *Jews*. This with the clandestine breaking of the seals, gives just cause to suspect some fraud in the case. The question then is, whether *Jesus* was really raised to life, as you affirm; or if his Body was stolen away, as the *Jews* pretend. The Evidence that you offer for proving the resurrection of *Jesus*, is the testimony of the Apostles; who say that they saw him alive, and convers'd with him often after he rose from the dead. But their evidence is justly exceptionable. For if there was any fraud in the case, as there is good reason to suspect; the Apostles are the Persons that must have been guilty of it: so that no regard can be had to their testimony. When in answer to the *Rabbi's* argument drawn from the secret breaking of the seals of the sepulchre; you affirm that God rais'd up *Jesus* early in the morning, and that the breaking of the seals was unavoidable, you plainly beg the question; and suppose the truth of *Jesus's* resurrection, which is the very point in debate between us.

Luk. xxiv.
5.—8.

N. We do not suppose the truth of this important Fact, but offer the most convincing Proofs of it; viz. the testimony not only of the *Apostles*, whose integrity is unquestionable; (as I have already shown, and shall more fully demonstrate afterwards;) but of the *Angels* who declared to the women that *Jesus* rose from the dead;

dead; of the *Women* themselves who *saw* him after his resurrection, and *spake* with him, and held *him by the feet*: and of the *Souldiers* who watch't the sepulchre; but being frighten'd by the Angels, the Earthquake, and other miraculous Circumstances of *Christ's* resurrection; went and declared all these things to the Chief-priests. Besides all this, we have the testimony of five hundred persons to whom *Jesus* appear'd at one time, after his resurrection; as St. *Paul* assures us. Now in opposition to this unexceptionable Evidence (by which the testimony of the Apostles is so fully confirm'd,) the *Jew* advances nothing but a bold incredible assertion, that the Apostles stole the body of *Jesus*: which he repeats twenty ways, without any evidence, or colour of proof, to support it. This is a plain shameful begging of the question. I have fully shewn that such a supposition is not only contrary to the character of the Apostles; but in itself absurd, and inconsistent: that *Jesus's* rising earlyer on the third day than the Chief-priests expected, was highly reasonable and necessary: that he neither knew of the Sepulchre's being seal'd; nor was obliged to regard it: that he cou'd not chuse the precise time or hour of his rising from the dead, on the third day: and that seeing Almighty God thought fit to raise him to life early in the morning; he then came out of the Sepulchre, and cou'd not avoid breaking the Seals of it. Let me now add, that your charging the Apostles with fraud on this occasion, as if they had stole away the body of *Jesus*, is the more groundless and absurd; because seeing the Sepulchre was guarded by souldiers, the fraud of which you suspect the Apostles was really impracticable.

SECT. VI.

Mat. xxviii.

9.

Joh. xx. 15,

18.

Mat. xxviii.

2.—4.

Ver. 11.

1 Cor. xv. 6.

Acts i. 15.

Ver. 21, 22.

Sect. VI.

Disc. 6. p.
12.

M. If it was impossible to evade the Guards of the sepulchre, then there was a real Resurrection: but if there was a bare *possibility* of evading them, then your Remark is of no force.

N. I know not whether the *Rabbi* means, that, if there was a bare *possibility* of evading the Guards; then there can be no proof given of a *real Resurrection*: Or, that if there was a bare possibility of the souldiers' sleeping, or their being bribed; then 'their being placed at the sepulchre cou'd be no security against Fraud. But each of these assertions is so manifestly false, that I need not attempt to prove them so. Tho it was not absolutely impossible, for the Apostles to evade the Guards; it is altogether incredible that they should.

Disc. 6. p.
12.

M. Tho the *Roman* souldiers were as faithful as any of their Profession; it is well known that such people are as subject to bribery and corruption as others. Or if their faithfulness to their trust was untainted; it is not unlikely that their Officers, by the direction of *Pilate*, (who found his account in the distractions of the Jews,) might give them the hint to wink hard at the Apostles' committing such a fraud as stealing the body of *Jesus*.

Joh. xix. 1.

Luk. xxiii.

14.

See Mar.

xxvii. 29.

N. How far the souldiers were from having had any hint or encouragement given them by *Pilate*, or from their Officers, to favour *Jesus*, or his Apostles, in any respect, appears plainly enough from their behaviour towards him during his Tryal, and his Crucifixion. As for *Pilate* himself, he ordered *Jesus* to be scourged, before he deliver'd him to be crucify'd; tho he own'd, at the same time, that he *found no fault in him*. And by his Orders probably, (or his permission at least) the Souldiers then presented *platted a Crown of Thorns, and put it on Jesus's*

Jesus's head. Nay they were not content with insulting him themselves; but *called together the whole Band*: who likewise *mock't* him, and *spat* upon him; *smote* him on the head; and treated him with the utmost spite and contempt. When he was upon the Cross, they renewed their mockery and insults: and after he was dead, one of them pierced his side with a spear; as if he had been afraid that *Jesus* was not truly dead; and resolved to prevent all possibility of mistake. When *Joseph of Arimathea* came to *Pilate*, and beg'd the body of *Jesus*, in order to bury it, *Pilate* would not grant that request till he called the Centurion, and inquired whether *Jesus* had been *any while dead*. And when he was sure of *that*, he gave *Joseph* leave to carry away the Corpse. This very cautious behaviour of *Pilate*, and the barbarous cruelty of *his* Souldiers, looks as if he had intended to ingratiate himself with the Chief-Priests; and had been afraid of their indirect way of threatening him (at *Jesus's* Tryal) to represent him at *Rome*, as being *no Friend to Cæsar*. There is not the least reason therefore to suspect that the Souldiers were allowed to connive at such a fraud as stealing away the body of *Jesus*. And it is no less improbable that any of them shou'd be bribed into such treachery. But if one or two of them were supposed capable of being corrupted, it is the unlikelyest thing imaginable that they shou'd *All* consent to a Fraud that might cost them their life. They who might take a *secret* bribe, would not trust their reputation and life with one another.

T. The Evangelist tells us that the Souldiers were bribed by the Chief-Priests, and if they were corrupted by them; it is as likely they might be first bribed by the Disciples to let them steal the body away.

SECT. VI.

Mat. xv. 16.

Luk. xxiii.

36. 37. 38.

Joh. xix. 34.

33. 34.

Mark xv.

44. 45.

See Mat.

xxvii. 27.

See Joh.

xix. 12.

Mat. xxviii.

11—15.

SECT. VI.

Mat. xxviii.
12.See Luk.
ix. 3.
Acts iii. 6.
1 Cor. iv.
11, 12.

N. I proved before, both from the Character and Conduct of the Apostles, that they were in all respects incapable of such wickedness. Nor had they any money to bribe the Guards with: and far less such a *large* quantity as the Chief-Priests gave them, to calumniate the Apostles. They were as poor as their Master: and lived as he did upon the Charity of others. Besides there is a great difference betwixt prevailing with the Souldiers to tell a lye in common Discourse; and bribing them to be false to their Trust, when they were upon duty. Their telling a lye to please the Chief-Priests was attended with no immediate danger: And they might be the more easily tempted to do that, because they knew they were as much at liberty to tell the truth of *Jesus's* resurrection to some; as to speak falsely to others. But they cou'd not be bribed to betray their trust, without hazarding their life. And the more there were of them, the greater was the danger of a discovery. Tho' common Souldiers are not very conscientious in their Morals; they seem to have some sense of Honour when posted upon duty: Or at least they are kept honest by the fear of Death, or Disgrace. So that their being bribed to tell a lye in common Discourse, does not prove that they might equally be corrupted to be unfaithful to their Trust. Indeed no thing can be more incredible than that *all* the Guards shou'd be corrupted: or that the Apostles should attempt to do it.

M. Their fraud might have been effectually carry'd on, without supposing that the Souldiers were bribed; or that they connived at it. The account that the *Jews* give of the matter is probable enough, that the Disciples carry'd off the body of *Jesus*, while the Guards were asleep.

N. This

N. This is all the Evidence you have to offer for proving the Fraud you talk of; the testimony of men, who if they had really been asleep (as is pretended,) cou'd neither hear nor see any thing of the matter in question. But that the Souldiers who gave this senseless kind of Evidence, were bribed to conceal the real truth of *Christ's* resurrection, which they testify'd to the Chief-Priests; and to tell a ridiculous lye in order to amuse the Common-people, appears plainly from the testimony of *St. Matthew*; who wou'd never have recorded any thing of this heinous Charge against himself, and the other Apostles, if there had been any colour, or possibility of Truth in it. If the Souldiers had really been guilty of such a gross offence as falling asleep, when they were upon duty; they durst not have owned it: for they must have expected to be put to death for their unfaithfulness.

M. The Evangelist assures us they *did* own it: that they *took the money* which the Chief-Priests gave them. And if they *did as they were taught*, they must have own'd themselves guilty of neglecting their duty. Mat. xxviii. 15.

N. If they had own'd this to *Pilate*; nay if they had not given him sufficient proof of their having honestly discharged their Trust, they must have suffer'd the rigour of military Discipline, which inflicts death upon Guards that are unfaithful. To please the Chief-Priests, whose rage and malice *Pilate* seems to have dreaded, he might connive at the souldiers taking money of them to amuse the populace, by telling the inconsistent story of the Disciples stealing away the body of *Jesus*, while the Guards slept. But he would not have suffered the souldiers to do this, if he had not, upon the strictest inquiry, been as well assured as the Chief-priests were, of

SECT. VI. of the Earthquake, the appearance of the Angel, and other miraculous circumstances of the resurrection; and been fully satisfy'd that the guards had faithfully discharged their duty.

Disc. vi.
P. 21.

M. They might have really slept, and have own'd it, notwithstanding the severity of the martial Law: because they might perhaps depend upon the Interest and Influence that the Chief-Priests had with *Pilate*. For, *Matthew* says they promised the Souldiers to *secure* them, by procuring them the Governor's pardon and favour, in case he should hear of their owning that they fell asleep, while they were upon duty.

Acts xii.
6—11.

Ver. 18, 19.

Ch. xvi.
23—28.

N. Such a gross offence as a Souldier's sleeping while he is posted upon duty is unpardonable at all times. The guards cou'd not hope for any favour in such a case. The Martial Law was most severely executed among the *Romans*; especially when Souldiers neglected their duty in a tributary Country; where the people were ready, (and were always expected) to revolt: which was the case of the *Jews* after they were conquer'd by the *Romans*. When *Peter* who was miraculously deliver'd out of a Prison guarded by Souldiers, who watcht before the prison-door; *Herod* examin'd the Guards: and tho they had neither slept, nor any-way transgress't their duty: yet because he thought it was impossible for *Peter* to escape, without their knowing of it, he order'd them to be put to death; upon such strong suspicions of their unfaithfulness. And when *Paul* and *Silas* in prison, with their feet fasten'd in the stocks, were singing praises to God; at midnight an Earthquake thook the foundations of the prison: all the doors were opened; and the fetters of the prisoners were loosed. When the Keeper

of the prison awoke, and saw the doors open, he drew his Sword, and was going to kill himself; thinking that the prisoners were fled. He knew that their escaping wou'd have cost him his life; seeing it wou'd have been imputed to his unfaithfulness, or neglect: and therefore he rather chose to dispatch himself immediately, than suffer the disgrace of a publick execution. But *Paul* called to him, and hinder'd him from killing himself, assuring him that the prisoners were all safe. These two instances are sufficient to show how severely the neglect, or unfaithfulness of guards was punish't among the *Romans*: and how improbable it is that the Souldiers, who were set to watch the sepulchre of *Jesus*, shou'd all fall asleep. The thing is in itself quite incredible. Such a gross instance of neglect as a Souldier's sleeping when posted upon Duty, is scarce ever heard of. If they had no sense of Honour, or of the publick Safety, (which often depends upon the fidelity and vigilance of Guards) the very fear of Death is enough to keep them awake. And since Centinels are always relieved in a few hours, and know not how soon they may be seen by some person or other, they can never be under any temptation to sleep; nor in the least danger of giving way to drowsiness. Their life is at stake every moment: And the sense of that is sufficient to make them steddily watchful. Besides, in the present case the number of the Guards was an additional Security both as to their vigilance, and honesty.

M. It is uncertain of what number the Watch consisted. *Whitby* says they were sixty: ^{19.} but he has no reason nor authority for it. Seeing they were only designed to guard against fraud, three or four were sufficient. And it is

SECT. VI. not at all improbable that so few Souldiers shou'd be fast asleep, so early in the morning when the clandestin work was done.

N. Seeing *Pilate* gave the Chief-priests leave to chuse, or *take*, what *guard* they pleased, (for this seems to be the meaning of ἐχέτε κουστωδίαν,) we may be sure they took such a number of Souldiers as wou'd be an effectual Security both against fraud, and force. And since this Security must increase in proportion to the number of the Guards, we cannot suppose they were fewer than twenty. But allowing there were only half that number; it was morally impossible that they shou'd *all* fall asleep *at once*. A sense of their duty, and of their danger in neglecting it, wou'd make them watchful. Their discourse and mirth must have help't to keep them awake. And if any one of them had been inclined to sleep, the rest wou'd have hinder'd it.

Disc. 6. p.
20.

M. After keeping such a gaudy day as the Feast of the Passover, which like the Festivals of other nations was celebrated with excess; we may be sure that Foot-Souldiers, upon the bounty of one or other, did not want, nor wou'd they scruple to take, their fill; which like an Opiat lock't up their Senses for that night: when the Disciples being aware of the lucky opportunity, carry'd off the body of *Jesus* safely.

Ex. xxiii.
14—17.
Deut. xvi.
16.
See Acts ii.
8—12.

N. The Passover's being a gaudy day was the very reason why Guards were obliged (and expected by their Officers) to be more watchful than ordinary. The City was then crowded with *Jewish* Strangers from all quarters; who by the Law of *Moses* were obliged to come up and celebrate their three great Festivals at *Jerusalem*. On these occasions no doubt the
Guards

Guards were every-where reinforced ; and their Officers as well as the Souldiers were doubly active and vigilant. For if ever any Insurrection cou'd be attempted, one of those Feasts was the proper time for it. The whole force of the Jewish people was then collected at *Jerusalem*. And they had there an opportunity to concert their measures, and to rebel against the *Romans*, with a fairer prospect of success than at any other time. Every guard therefore must have been sure that they wou'd be often visited by their respective Officers, especially in the Night ; which was the most likely and favourable time for an Insurrection. And no thing can be more incredible than that the Guard at *Christ's* sepulchre, even supposing (what the *Rabbi* imagines without any shadow of reason) that there were only *four* Centinels placed there, should all fall asleep *at once*. Universal experience shows that there is the odds of at least a million to one against any one Souldier's sleeping when placed upon Duty. And the incredibility of such an accident's happening to all the Guards set at the sepulchre, increases in a far greater proportion, than the number of Souldiers supposed to be posted upon guard there. They cou'd not but know that *taking their fill* must have proved as fatal to them as the strongest *Opiat* : and that the least breach, or neglect, of their duty, at such a critical and dangerous juncture as the *Passover*, wou'd be punish't with the utmost rigour.

M. I see no absurdity in supposing that the Disc. 6. p. Disciples themselves might contrive to intoxicate the Guards. *Herodotus* tells a story of a dead body's being stolen away by such an Artifice. And I don't think the Disciples of *Jesus* either so foolish, or so conscientious as

SECT. VI. not to take the hint, and enterprize the like fraud.

N. This is a very pleasant conceit! Your Friend fancy's that ignorant Fishermen might take a hint of Fraud from *Herodotus*: and that the most illiterate people of *Galilee* might be thorowly acquainted with the politest Authors of *Greece*! He might as well suppose that they had learned all the Languages in which they afterwards preach't; and only pretended to be *illiterate*, that they might make a Miracle of their being able to preach in strange Tongues, as soon as they were endued with the Gifts of the Holy-Spirit. It is surprizing that one who has so much wit, and such a knack at demonstration as Mr. W, should let his *Rabbi* fall into such unaccountable blunders and absurditys. To their repeated Charge of Fraud, I have said enough already. The Gospels written by two of the Apostles, show that they were strictly sincere. And if you will allow them likewise to have had common-sense; they cou'd not possibly be either so weak, or so wicked, as to devise a Fraud that no man in his right wits can believe to be practicable.

Disc. 6. p.
23.

Ib. p. 25.

M. It has been a constant objection of the Jews against the resurrection of *Jesus*, that he did not appear personally afterwards to the Chief-priests, to *Pilate*, and his Crucifyers and Insulters; to upbraid them with their infidelity and ill treatment of him. I cannot but think he wou'd have done so, if he had really risen from the dead: and that he ought in reason to have thus appeared publickly, for the conviction and conversion of unbelievers. His not doing so, is a confirmation that he did not truly rise to life; but that his Body was stolen away: otherwise he wou'd have waited in the sepulchre

chre for the coming of the Sealers of the Stone, and their regular opening of it; to the conviction of all there present; and the confirmation of the Faith of all Ages and Nations since.

N. I answered all this fully before, when I showed you that since *Jesus* cou'd not be supposed to know any thing of the sealing of the sepulchre; or of the Chief-priests' designing to see it open'd; it was absurd to expect that he shou'd wait for them: that if he had known their design, it wou'd have been highly imprudent for him, after the State of his humiliation, or Suffering, was ended, to leave himself any more at their mercy: that it was inconsistent with the Wisdom, Majesty and Authority of God to raise up *Jesus*, at the precise hour, and in the very manner, that the Chief-priests prescribed; and inconsistent with the Honour and Dignity to which *Jesus* was then raised, to wait their leisure; or to appear personally to *Pilate*, or the Chief-priests. And it was altogether unnecessary too seeing his resurrection was fully notify'd, and proved to them, by the testimony of the Apostles.

M. Wou'd you have had the Jews of old (or will Infidels now) take the Word of the Apostles for the resurrection of *Jesus*, when they knew and experienced them to be grand cheats, not only in stealing away his dead body; but in the known imposture of *Lazarus's* resurrection. When Deceivers will not be Lyars; nor Thieves, dissemblers of the Fact they are accused of; I will own *Jesus's* rising again to have been made manifest enough to the Chief-priests.

N. Such poor thin Sophistry as this was never offer'd to the World before, under the name of Argument, and Demonstration. You say

SECT. VI. the Disciples were not to be believed, when they testify'd the resurrection of *Jesus*, because the Chief-priests had experienced them to be grand Cheats: and the proof of their being grand Cheats is, that they stole away the body of *Jesus*; and were concern'd in the known imposture of *Lazarus's* resurrection! The Chief-priests might say this, but they could not possibly believe it. They only said so to amuse and deceive the people: and Infidels are weak enough still to repeat the same senseless incredible calumny; without being able to offer the least proof of it; or to make it appear so much as *possible* that the Apostles shou'd devyse or attempt such a Fraud as stealing the body of *Jesus*. That supposition appears monstrously absurd at first sight. None but madmen cou'd devyse such a project; none but the wickedest of men cou'd give into it. The Apostles were neither mad, nor wicked. And if they cou'd possibly have devysed and attempted such a fraud, it was really impracticable; and must certainly have been discover'd. But I have said enough on this point. The resurrection of *Jesus* was not only testify'd by the Apostles; but was confirm'd by the Souldiers who told all things to the Chief-priests; and cou'd not but own that when they felt the *Earthquake* that happen'd, and saw the Angel roll the *Stone* from the Sepulchre, they *shook for fear* and became as *dead men*. As to the suspicion of any Fraud in the raising of *Lazarus*, nothing can be more absurd than the *Rabbi's* offering *that*, as a reason for the Chief-priests' disbelieving the testimony of the Apostles concerning the resurrection of *Jesus*. When we examin'd the Case of *Lazarus*, I fully proved that an imposture there was morally impossible. The Apostles

Mat. xxviii.
17.

Ver. 4.

had no more concern in that Transaction than SECT. VI. the other Spectators. *Jesus* and his Disciples had been absent from *Bethany* about two months, and at least fifty miles distant, when *Lazarus* dyed, and was bury'd.

M. If there had not been a *known imposture* Disc. 6. p. in that pretended resurrection, the Evangelist ^{23.} wou'd never have *implicitly called it so*.

N. Your Friend falls into endless blunders and inconsistencies. If *St. Matthew* had known, or suspected, any thing of Fraud in the raising of *Lazarus*, he wou'd not have called it so, either plainly, or implicitly. While he was endeavouring to *aggrandize the fame of Jesus for a worker of Miracles*, wou'd he have given the least hint, or implicit intimation, that one of his chief Miracles was but a cheat? But where does *Matthew implicitly call it so*? If *πλάνη*, in the passage pointed at, signify'd an *imposture* (which I shewed before it does not;) See p. 316. why is it to be apply'd to the resurrection of *Lazarus*, more than to any other of *Christ's* Miracles? and if *that* resurrection had been meant; is the Evangelist answerable for the folly and malice of the Chief-priests? The Word *πλάνη* is used by *them*: *Matthew* only repeats *their* words. And to say that the Evangelist *implicitly calls* the resurrection of *Lazarus* a *known imposture*, is such a gross instance of falsehood and prevarication as one cou'd not expect from any man that pretended to common sense or honesty. Instead of playing with such an ambiguous word as *πλάνη*, to show his skill in criticism, the Rabbi shou'd have kept to *πλάνη*, which wou'd have fitted him better; because it always signifies a *Deceiver*, or *Impostor*. It is used on the very same occasion, by the Chief-priests, in their speech to *Pilate*; and,

SECT. VI.

Mat. xxvii.

63.

without any hint, or implicit intimation, is manifestly apply'd by them to *Jesus*. Whence, according to the *Rabbi's* new Logick, he might have inferr'd not only that *Jesus* was a *known* Impostor; but that the *Evangelist* plainly calls him so. And then the *Jew* might have apply'd that general character of an *Impostor*, to the case of *Lazarus*, or to whatever purpose he pleased. After such a *demonstration* of *Jesus's* being a *deceiver*, the *Rabbi's* implicit admirers probably wou'd not have discover'd who is the *real* Deceiver; nor where the *barefaced imposture* lay: whether in the *Fact* we are examining; or in *his* arguing upon it. An uncommon height of assurance (which a *Deceiver* always has) wou'd have hinder'd them from any farther inquiry into the Subject. He needed only to have said that a "resurrection both of *Lazarus* and of *Jesus* was pretended, to the delusion if possible of all mankind; (and to the amazement of every one that can think freely;) in which *Jesus* and his Apostles have been more successful than cou'd be imagined, upon a project that had so little sense or reason, so little colour of truth or artifice in the contrivance and execution of it." I'm verily perswaded, Sir, that the Argument I have now mention'd, wou'd have appear'd to every-one who can think freely, as strong and convincing as that which the *Rabbi* has urged about the breaking of the Seals; and have been as satisfactory to his greatest admirers.

T. Mr. N, you chuse rather to animadvert severely upon a slip in reasoning, or an inaccurate expression, than to enlarge upon points of greater importance. You have offer'd but little to justify *Jesus's* not appearing to *Pilate* and the Chief-priests, as he ought to have done,

Disc. 6. p. 16.

p. 17.

done, for the conviction and converting of un-believers. SECT. VI.

N. The undoubted Miracles that *Jesus* wrought before his death, convinced and converted many unbelievers. And it cou'd not be expected that those who resisted such powerful Evidence as he then gave of his divine Mission, wou'd have been in the least influenced by his appearing personally to the Chief-priests, after his resurrection. If he had appeared to them in the most publick manner; and had ascended into Heaven, in their presence; there is no reason to think that this wou'd have effectually convinced them of his being the *Messiah*. They wou'd have pretended that there was some magical Enchantment in the case: that the Form he appeared in was not substantial flesh and blood; but an airy phantom that vanish't out of their sight. And if they had still continued incredulous, or pretended to be so; and had deny'd the truth of his resurrection; this wou'd have somewhat lessen'd the credibility and influence of the Apostles' testimony; among those at least who might have chosen rather to depend on the Judgment and Evidence of the Chief-priests. And then Infidels wou'd have said, that there must have been some imposture, or illusion, in *Jesus's* appearing to the Chief-priests: for, that if it had been real, no "People cou'd possibly be so bigoted, byass't, and prejudiced, as not to have been wrought upon by such a manifest Miracle."

Disc. 5. p. 46.

M. If *Jesus* had appeared to the Chief-priests as he did to his Disciples, in such a *Form* as that they cou'd not know him, they cou'd not have been sure that he was the same person whom they crucify'd: and then we might reasonably

SECT. VI. *W*sonably expect that they wou'd disbelieve his resurrection, and the reality of his appearing, (or at least doubt of it,) as the Disciples themselves did.

N. The Apostles wou'd not believe that *Jesus* was risen from the dead, till they *saw* him themselves. When he first appear'd to them, they were affrighted, and fancy'd that they saw some *ghost*. And when he showed them his hands and his feet; they hardly believed *their-own* senses, so transported were they with Joy and Wonder. But when he discoursed much, and ate with them, and gave them *infallible proofs* of his resurrection, their doubts and disbelief ceased. Their backwardness to believe it at first showed that they were far from being credulous, or easily imposed on. And it happen'd providentially to prove the occasion of their having more unquestionable Proofs of the reality of *Jesus's* body, and his appearing to them, than cou'd have been given them, if they had *readily* believed his resurrection. They had at the same time the concurring evidence of *all* their Senses to assure them of it. Had they been forward to believe, it wou'd have furnish't Infidels with a better handle for cavilling at the proofs of *Christ's* resurrection than they have now. If the Apostles had understood the Scriptures, and his repeated prediction that he shou'd rise again on the third day: if they had depended upon it, and been ready to believe the first report of *Jesus's* being risen, without the least diffidence; you wou'd have said that their Faith was the effect of their strong prepossessions, and warm hopes: that their eager expectation of *Christ's* rising again made them credulously believe the idle tales that the women told them; and afterwards to dream,

See 1 Joh. i.
1.

dream, in the day-time, of Appearances which SECT. VI. their Enthusiasm made them mistake for real  Facts. But now, *that* distrust and incredulity, which to others is a proof of their inexcusable obstinacy, must be reckon'd by you an argument of their good-sense. And it certainly adds the greatest weight to their testimony. They continued in their Unbelief as long as they possibly cou'd. And when they had the utmost conviction and certainty of *Jesus's* being risen, they yielded at last, and acknowledged the Truth.

T. Matthew tells us that when the eleven Ch. xxviii. 16. Disciples met *Jesus* at a mountain in *Galilee*, where he had appointed them to come, they worship't him; *but some doubted*: which shows they were not *all* fully satisfy'd that it was *Jesus* whom they saw.

N. By the *some* who *doubted*, the Evangelist cou'd not mean any of the *eleven* Apostles: for he says that *they* worship't *Jesus* when they saw him; which was the strongest proof they cou'd give of their being fully convinced that he was truly risen from the dead. Hence we may reasonably collect that this appearance of *Jesus* to his Apostles was not the *first*, which the other Evangelists speak of, that happen'd on the very day of his resurrection; (when the Apostles behaved themselves in a quite different manner :) but rather his last appearing to them just before his Ascension. Now since the *eleven* worship't *Jesus* on this occasion (as *St. Luke* likewise assures us) those who *doubted*, Ch. xxiv. 54. must be some of the many *other* Disciples that probably went with the Apostles into *Galilee*. The number of those other Disciples was very great. When, after the Ascension of *Jesus*, the Apostles chose one to fill up the room of *Judas*, there
 were

SECT. VI. were upwards of a hundred of these Disciples assembled together with the Apostles at *Jerusalem*. But besides these, there must have been many other Disciples, who joyned them on their way to *Galilee*. St. Paul tells us that *Jesus* was seen of above *five hundred* at once; of whom the *greatest part* were alive when he wrote his first Letter to the *Corinthians*. And it is very probable that it was in *Galilee* that *Jesus* appear'd to this great number; and at that very time when the Apostles met him there. Now it is not to be wonder'd if *some* few of those Disciples who perhaps saw *Jesus* but once after his resurrection, *doubted* whether it was he or not. His terrible sufferings, and great loss of blood, (under his *Agony* in the Garden, his being *scourged*, and crown'd with *Thorns*; and by the wounds that the large nails made in his *hands* and *feet*, besides the gash in his Side with the souldier's Spear,) might affect, and alter, both his Voice, and his Features. And perhaps some aire of Dignity and Glory upon his Countenance after his resurrection, might cause such a visible alteration in his Aspect, that *some* of those Disciples who knew him intirely well before, might *doubt* at first (as the Apostles themselves did) whether he was the very same Person.

T. St. Paul mentions several appearances of *Jesus* after his resurrection, that the Evangelists say nothing of. It is to me surprizing, that *he* shou'd know more of these things than those who were Eye-witnesses: or that they shou'd *All* happen to forget such a memorable Fact, as *Christ's* appearing to five hundred Disciples at once.

N. This is not more surprizing than that three of the Evangelists shou'd forget the resurrection of *Lazarus*: and that St. Matthew shou'd

thou'd not mention the *Ascension* of *Jesus*; SECT. VI.
 which was of far greater importance than his
 appearing to a great number of his Disciples
 after his resurrection. I accounted sufficiently
 for all these omissions before, when we discoursed
 of *Lazarus's* Case: and I need not repeat here
 what I then said. From St. *Luke's* saying that AA. i. 3.
Jesus after his rising from the dead *was seen* of
 his Disciples *forty Days*; and that he *spake* to
 them *of the things pertaining to the kingdom of*
God, we may conclude that he appear'd to them
 oftener than is mentioned either in the Gospels,
 or by St. *Paul*. He mentions some appearances
 of *Jesus* that the Evangelists take no notice of;
 and has omitted others that they relate. It was
 not necessary that they shou'd record all the
 remarkable Actions or Incidents of *Jesus's* life.
 They study'd brevity so much in their Gospels,
 that, comparatively speaking, they mention
 but a few of his Miracles; and fewer of his
 Discourses: and the account of his Appearan-
 ces after his resurrection is as full as cou'd be
 expected in such short Narratives as the Evan-
 gelists wrote. However St. *Paul's* testimony is
 in all respects as credible as theirs. He might
 either have had an immediate revelation from See Gal. i. 12.
Christ of those few particulars that the Evan-
 gelists omitted: or he might have been inform'd
 of them by the Apostles themselves, and by
 many of those 500 Disciples that he *knew* 1 Cor. xv. 6.
 were alive when he wrote to the *Corinthians*.

M. Whoever blends together the various Disc. 6. p. 29.
 history of the four Evangelists, as to *Jesus's*
 appearances after his resurrection, will find
 himself not only perplex't how to make an in-
 telligible, consistent, and sensible story of it;
 but must think it like some of the confused
 and incredible womanish fables of the appariti-

SECT. VI.  ons of the ghosts of deceased persons ; which the christian world used to abound with. There has been so much clear proof of fraud in many of those storys, that the wise and considerate part of mankind has rejected them all, excepting this of *Jesus*, which to admiration has stood its ground. It is a sweet morsel of Faith : and they readily swallow and digest it, because they live by it : otherwise this story of *Jesus's* appearances after his death had hardly escaped the fate of other Apparitions.

N. Were we to judge of the account that the Evangelists give us of *Jesus's* appearances by what the *Rabbi* calls a *parallel Case* that he tells, or supposes, of the late Dr. *Emms* and his fraternity ; I shou'd agree with him that we shou'd find ourselves much *perplex't how to make an intelligible, consistent, and sensible story of it*. Seeing the Jew pretended to relate a story that was *parallel* to the appearances of *Jesus* after his resurrection, he shou'd have fairly represented *one* at least of the six instances he mentions. But instead of that, he has throughout given us a senseless incoherent jumble of different Facts. Of one appearance he has made three : And instead of telling a parallel story, he has misrepresented the case in every single instance. He says (or insinuates) that the Women did not know *Jesus by his countenance, but by his talk on Scripture-prophecy*. This is directly false. He said nothing to them of *prophecy*, or of the *Scripture* : but bade them tell his Disciples that they shou'd go and meet him in *Galilee*. As soon as he spake to them, they knew him ; and *beld him by the feet* (a mark of the greatest respect in Eastern Countrys,) and *worship't him*. Yet the *Rabbi* tells us that *their eyes were holden* ; an expression that St. *Luke* uses

Disc. 6. p.
33.

Mat. xxviii.
9. 10.

Ch. xxiv. 16.

uses of the two Disciples going to *Emmaus*: SECT. VI. which fact your Friend confounds with that of *Christ's* appearing to the Women. *Mary Magdalene* indeed did not know him at first when he appear'd to her *alone*: because her Modesty and Grief might hinder her from looking directly in his face: nor did she then expect to see him *alive*. But when He called her by her name, in the same familiar way he formerly used, she immediately knew him; and seems to have *held* him by the feet, worshipping him, as the other women did when he appear'd to them afterward. The *Rabbi* next represents See Mark xvi. 9. the two Disciples that were going to *Emmaus*, as knowing *Jesus* not by the features of his face, but by an habitual motion and action of his hand *in breaking of bread*. *St. Luke* says, *their eyes were holden* so that they did not know him: the plain meaning of which expression is, that they did not at first discern who he was. They had not the least thought of seeing *Jesus* then. He was probably in the habit of a Traveller, or in some Dress different from what he used to wear: which is all that *St. Mark* might mean by his appearing to them *in another form*: unless he alluded to some such remarkable alteration in his aspect as I mentioned before. * But considering that it was about the dusk of the evening when he overtook them, we cannot wonder that they shou'd not know him, till they went into the house, and had a direct and full view of his Face; which they had not had till he came to *break bread*, or *eat* with them. But then *their eyes were open'd*: that is, they clearly perceived the truth; and knew that it was *Jesus*; who soon after *withdrew*, and left them. “ At another time he was corporally Disc. vi. p. present, but they thought they saw a Spirit.” ^{34.}

* See, *The Trial of the Witnesses of Christ's resurrection*, p. 68.

SECT. VI. The *Rabbi* is very concise in his account of this memorable appearance of *Jesus* to his Disciples; and slips over it carelessly, as if there had been nothing in it, but that they fancy'd they saw a spirit, or apparition. The truth of the case was this. “ *Jesus* came and stood in the midst of the Apostles, and said to them, peace be unto you. Upon which they were terrified, and supposed that they saw a *Ghost*. But he said unto them why are ye troubled? And why do thoughts [*διαλογισμοί*, doubts,] arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I my self: handle me, and see: for a *Ghost* hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have. When he had said this, he shewed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, but wonder'd, he said to them, have ye here any meat? So they gave him a piece of broiled fish, and of an honey comb: and he took it, and did eat before them.” About eight days after that (as the *Rabbi* tells us) *Jesus* appear'd among more of his old Friends: but for all their former intimacy with him, some of them doubted whether it was he or not. Here again he confounds two different appearances; one recorded by St. *Matthew*, when the *Eleven* (and other Disciples) saw and worship't *Jesus* in *Galilee*; tho' some doubted: (which I explain'd before:) this, I say, he blends with another appearance of *Jesus* related by St. *John*. “ At another time he came to them in another form and shape: but they were sure it was he by his exposition of the Scripture.” Here again the *Rabbi* alludes to the same appearance of *Jesus* to the two Disciples, which was mentioned twice before. But St. *Luke* says nothing of their being sure it was he, by his exposition of

Luk. xxiv.
36.

Ch. xxviii.
17.

Ch. xxi. 26.

the Scripture : he tells us they did not know him till they came into the house. The *Rabbi* goes on thus. " At another time when they were assembled together and the doors were lock'd... *he* slipt unexpectedly into their Company, either from behind a Curtain, or miraculously entered at the key-hole." This is the same appearance with that mentioned before, when they thought they saw a *Ghost*; or it must be what the *Rabbi* next speaks of. But as to the fact, which he ridicules; there is no difficulty in it. If the door was lock'd, (as seems very probable;) it must have been miraculously open'd, before *Jesus* cou'd come in. But this is no more than what happen'd to his Apostles afterward. An Angel open'd the prison-doors in the night; and set two of them at liberty. When *Peter* was miraculously brought out of prison an iron-gate open'd for him, of its own accord. And the like happen'd in favour of *Paul* and *Silas*. The last time that *Jesus* appear'd (as the *Rabbi* tells us in his parallel story,) " there was one of his intimate friends had not known him but by a sore in his breast, which the power of God in his resurrection did not heal." This refers to the second appearance of *Jesus* to the eleven, when he condescended to give *Thomas* that proof of his being really risen from the dead, which he required. When the rest told him they had seen the Lord, he declared he wou'd not believe that he was risen, unless he shou'd see in his hands the print (or mark) of the nails he was fasten'd with to the cross; and * put his hand into

* It is not easy to imagin why our Translators, in *Joh. xx. 25.* render'd βάλεν thrust. In the very same verse they rightly translate it, put: and it shou'd have been render'd

SECT. VI. into (or rather, *upon*) *his Side*, to feel the mark of the gash that was made there with a spear. So when *Jesus* appear'd to the *eleven* next time, “ he said to *Thomas*, reach hither thy finger, “ and behold my hands: and reach hither thy “ hand, and *put* it into [or, *upon*] my side; and “ be not faithless, but believing.” *Thomas* was resolved to have the same satisfaction and assurance of *Jesus*’s being risen that the other Disciples had, when he was not with them. They had seen his hands and his feet: and *he* wou’d see the mark not only of the nails in his hands; but of the wound in his side. Does this imply that the wide wound he received with a spear was still *sore*; and so *open*, that *Thomas* cou’d put his hand *into* it, even after his resurrection? All that *Thomas* cou’d desire, or *Jesus* offer him, was, that he might *put* his hand *upon* his side (or *into* his *bosom*) and feel the mark of the wound that the spear made there. If the wound had not been closed up, *Jesus* cou’d not possibly have been brought to life. But tho’ there cou’d be no *Sore* in his side, the *mark* of the wound might remain, and be easily felt by *Thomas*, when he put his hand into *Jesus*’s bosom. When the *Rabbi* speaks of the Ascension, he says, *he vanish’t away, and was* Ch. xxiv. 50. *taken up into Heaven*. St. *Luke* gives us the following account of it. “ *Jesus* led them out “ (and therefore must have walk’t with them) as “ far as [from *Jerusalem*] to *Bethany*. And he “ lift up his hands and blessed them. And

the same way in both expressions; thus,—“ except I put “ my finger *upon* the print of the nails; and *put* my hand “ *upon* his side, I will not believe.” *us* here shou’d rather be render’d *upon*, than *into*. It is used by the same Evangelist to signify, *upon*, in ch. viii. 6. See also *Mat.* xxvi. 10. *Luk.* xv. 22.

“ while

“ while he blessed them, he was parted from SECT. VI.
 “ them, and carry’d up into Heaven : so they Acts i. 10.
 “ worship’t him. And while they look’t sted-
 “ fastly towards heaven, as he went up, be-
 “ hold two men stood by them in white
 “ apparel ; and said, ye men of *Galilee* ,
 “ why stand ye gazing up into Heaven ?
 “ This same *Jesus* who is taken up from you
 “ into Heaven shall so come [again] in like
 “ manner as ye have seen him go into Heaven.
 “ So the Disciples returned to *Jerusalem* with Luk. xxiv.
 “ great joy.” These, Sir, are *some* of the ap-^{52.}
 pearances of *Jesus* to his Disciples that the
 Evangelists have recorded. Now what greater
 assurances cou’d he possibly have given them
 of his being risen than he did actually give
 them ? He often and plainly foretold his re-
 surrection. And since they found that his
 other prophecys were punctually fulfilled ;
 when his body was gone from the sepulchre,
 they ought to have believed that he was risen
 to life ; and that his prediction of this great
 event too was certainly accomplish’t. So that
 really they wou’d have had sufficient reason to
 believe his resurrection, even tho’ he had ne-
 ver appeared to them at all. But it being a
 Fact of the greatest importance, concerning
 which it was proper to give them the *fullest*
 satisfaction ; because they were to testify it to
 the World, and even to seal their Testimony
 with their blood ; he assured them of his re-
 surrection, first by the appearance of two An-
 gels, who declared to the Women that he was
 risen from the dead. He confirm’d this evi-
 dence by appearing to the Women himself. He
 appeared afterwards to *Peter* : then to the Ele-
 ven assembled together. They saw him ; and
 heard him. He shewed them his hands and

SACR. VI. his feet. He ate with them ; and gave them all possible proofs that it was *Jesus* himself, and not a Phantom, or ghost, that appear'd and spake to them. He conversed often and familiarly with him, during the forty days betwixt his resurrection, and ascension. And at his last appearance and discourse with them, they saw him ascend into Heaven. If all this evidence that they had for the truth of his resurrection might be deceitful or illusive ; we can be sure of nothing whatever.

M. If the storys that the Evangelists tell us could be rely'd on, there wou'd be no room for doubting of *Jesus's* resurrection, or questioning the reality of his appearing. But his not appearing *openly* to the Chief-priests to upbraid them with their unbelief, and ill treatment of him is an invincible objection ; and gives us just reason to suspect the testimony of the Apostles, and the truth of *Jesus's* rising from the dead.

Disc. 6. p.
25,

N. I shewed you before that *according to the laws of reason* (or the rules of wisdom and prudence) he ought not to have appear'd to the Chief-priests. It was sufficient that, according to his promise, he *endued* his Apostles *with power from on high* ; and by the miraculous Gifts of the Holy Spirit, which he bestowed upon them, enabled and commission'd them in his name to *upbraid his Crucifyers and insulters*, with their infidelity, and ill treatment of him. This they did with such constancy of mind, and with such an undaunted resolution, as amazed the Chief-priests. And the indisputable miracles they wrought publicly at *Jerusalem*, together with the other wonderful Gifts they were endued with, especially their preaching in several Tongues that they had never heard, or learn't,

Acts ii. 4, 5,
1-12.

learn't, converted Thousands of *Jews* at one time. When *Peter* cured a Man who was lame from his birth, bidding him in the name of *Jesus* of *Nazareth*, rise up and walk : as soon as he took him by the hand to lift him up, immediately his feet and ancle bones received strength ; and he leapt up, and enter'd with *Peter* and *John* into the temple walking, and leaping, and praising God. And when the people who knew him, and crouded about him and the Apostles, were fill'd with wonder and amazement, *Peter* said, “ ye men of *Israel* why

SECT. VI.

Acts iii. 1-19.

“ marvel ye at this ? or why look ye so earnestly upon us, as tho' by our-own power or holiness we had made this man to walk. “ The God of our Fathers hath glorify'd his Son *Jesus* whom ye deliver'd up, and deny'd [or rejected] him in the presence of *Pilate*, when he was determin'd to let him go : but ye refused the Holy-One and the Just ; and desired a murderer to be granted unto you. And ye killed the Prince of life ; whom God hath raised from the dead ; whereof we are witnesses. And his name [or * power] through [our] Faith in his name hath made this man strong whom ye see and know. Yea the faith which is by [*Jesus*] hath given him this perfect Soundness in the presence of you all.” I cannot but observe here that there was not the least room for cavilling against this miracle. It was wrought in open day ; in the most publick place of *Jerusalem* ; before numerous witnesses ; upon one that was a cripple from his birth ; and was well known to the people, by his being carry'd and laid every day at the chief gate of the Temple. He was cured in a moment ; without the use of any means : and in the name

* See ch. iv.

Phil. ii. 9, 10.

SECT. VI. of *Jesus* of *Nazareth*. So that there was not the least room for suspecting any fraud or collusion in the Miracle...

M. But what is all this to the purpose? you talk't of the Apostles' being *commission'd* to *upbraid the Chief-priests* with their ill treatment of *Jesus*: and instead of showing this, you tell us a long Story of *Peter's* curing a cripple; and making a Speech upon it to the mob.

N. I thought it proper to give you *one* unquestionable proof of *Christ's* having endued his Apostles with a miraculous power, and other Gifts, to qualify them for their weighty Office. And I was going to add, that when the High-priest with the Rulers were assembled in Council next day, and had the Man who had been lame, as well as the Apostles, brought before them; the Council cou'd not *deny that a notable Miracle had been done by them, as was manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem*. On this occasion the behaviour and language of the

Acts iv. 8.

Apostles is very remarkable. *Peter* being fill'd and animated by the Holy-Spirit, said unto them, " Ye Rulers of the people and Elders of *Israel*, seeing we are this day examin'd concerning the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; be it known to you, and to all the people of *Israel*, that by the name of *Jesus Christ* of *Nazareth*, whom *YE* crucify'd, and whom God rais'd from the dead, even by *Him* doth this man stand here before you whole." When the Council saw the boldness of *Peter* and *John*, and perceiv'd that they were unlearned and ignorant Men, they marvell'd; and found that they had been always with *Jesus*. Then after consult-

ing

ing together in the absence of the Apostles, SECT. VI. they called them in, and commanded them not  to *preach* at all, or teach in the name of *Jesus*.

But *Peter* and *John* answer'd them, " whether v. 19.

" it be right in the sight of God to hearken

" unto you *rather* than unto God, judge ye ;

" we cannot but speak the things that we have

" seen and heard. " So when the Council had

farther threatned them, they let them go ; find-

ing no way how they might punish them, be-

cause of the people : for all men glorify'd God

for that which was done. You see, Sir, that

the Apostles spoke and acted like Ambassadors

from the *King of Kings*, and *Lord of all*, with Rev. xi. 16

dignity and authority ; and such an inflexible Acts v. 30.

resolution and courage as no threats nor suffer-

ings cou'd shake. They said to their Judges,

the High-priest, and his Council, those impla-

cable wicked men who had so lately murder'd

their Master, " the God of our Fathers raised Acts vii. 57.

" up *Jesus* whom *HE* slew and hanged on a tree,

" Him hath God exalted with [or, *to*] his right

" hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour to give re-

" pentance unto *Israel*, and forgiveness of Sins,

" We are his Witnesses of these things : and

" so also is the Holy-Ghost, whom God hath

" given to them that obey him. " With the

same freedom and boldness did *Stephen* speak to

them, when his doing *great wonders and mira-*

cles among the people enraged the Chief-priests,

and led them to suborn witnesses against him,

to put him to death. " Ye stiffnecked and

" uncircumcised in heart and ears, (said he)

" ye do always resist the Holy-Ghost. As

" your Fathers did, so do ye. Which of the

" Prophets have not your Fathers persecuted ?

" nay they slew them who *foretold* the coming

" of the Just One of whom *HE* have now been

SECT. VI. *“ the Betrayers and Murderers. ”* Dared any criminal talk at this rate to his exasperated Judges? Doth this look like the language of Impostors? Such sedateness of mind, such intrepidity and steddyness in the conduct of *Jesus’s* Disciples, was the clearest proof of their Integrity. No thing can be more surprizing than the sudden change that we find in the temper, views, and conduct of the Apostles. At the Tryal and Death of *Jesus* how cowardly, timorous, and dejected were they! They all forsook him the moment he was seized. The boldest of them, when question’d only by a woman, deny’d that he knew *Jesus*. They were afraid of the *Jews*; and of every thing. They met secretly; and mourn’d and wept. Nothing cou’d comfort them, till *Jesus* appear’d to them after his resurrection. This gave them Joy, and raised their Spirits. When they had convers’d often, and much, with him; and saw him ascend into Heaven, they firmly believed and expected that he wou’d perform his promise, and bestow upon them the Gift of the Holy-Ghost. In expectation of this they tarry’d at *Jerusalem*: they met publickly; and out of a great number of other disciples, they chose One to be an Apostle in the room of *Judas*. And on the day of Pentecost, the Holy-Ghost came upon them. Then they wrought astonishing miracles: they spoke languages they had never learnt. Their minds were enlighten’d, comforted, animated. They were fill’d with the wonderful Gifts of prophecy, and discerning of Spirits; with wisdom, knowledge, a prudent Zeal, an undaunted Courage, and an utter neglect and disregard of this world and its enjoyments. They now preach the resurrection and doctrine

Luk. xxiv.
52, 53.

trine of *Jesus* publicly in *Jerusalem*. When SECT. VI. called to account for their behaviour, they own the Truth: they *upbraid* the High-priest and Rulers with crucifying the *holy One*, the righteous *Jesus*. They declare that they are witnesses of God's having rais'd him from the dead: and exalted him to his right hand in Glory. They despise threatnings: and persevere resolutely in doing their duty, and preaching the doctrine of *Jesus* daily, in the very *Temple*. And when imprison'd, beaten, and persecuted, they *rejoyce that they are counted* Acts v. 42 *worthy to suffer for his name*. Cou'd there now be any pretence for disbelieving their Testimony concerning the resurrection of *Jesus*, when they were empower'd by him to confirm it, and the truth of his doctrine, by Miracles as astonishing as the resurrection itself? One wou'd think such Evidence must have been irresistible.

M. I have not yet had occasion to examine the credentials of the apostolical *Ambassadors*. All I shall say of them at present is, that they had lived long enough with their *Prince* to learn the art of working such miracles as he did. As for the wonderful Gifts of the Holy-Ghost, tho' they amused the common-people, and perhaps converted thousands of them; the men of Sense at *Jerusalem* saw the mistake, and ridiculed the enthusiastick pretence of speaking unknown Tongues. They told the Apostles to their face, that they were fuddled: and that the fumes of *new wine* had got up into their heads, and made them prate in a kind of gibberish that might well pass for *unknown Languages*.

SECT. VI. N. To show how ridiculously false this charge is, I need only appeal to the nature of the miraculous Gift of speaking unknown Tongues, which the Apostles were endued with: and the wonderful Circumstances that attended the conveyance of it. When they were all assembled on the day of Pentecost, suddenly there came a Sound from Heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, that fill'd all the House where they were sitting. And there appear'd to them *cloven Tongues as of Fire* (a lively emblem of the wonderful Gift now bestow'd on the Apostles,) and sat (or hover'd) upon each of them. So they were all filled with the Holy-Ghost, and began to speak with other Tongues [than they understood before,] as the Spirit gave them utterance. At this time there were devout Jews of every nation at Jerusalem; who had come thither to celebrate the great feast of Pentecost. And when the miraculous Gift bestowed on the Apostles was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were astonish't, because every Man, whatever Country he was of, heard one or other of the Apostles speak in his own language: and they said one to another, are not all these which speak *Galileans*? How then hear we them speaking, each of us in our-own Tongue? *Parthians* and *Medes*, and *Elamites*, and the dwellers in *Mesopotamia*, and *Cappadocia*, in *Pontus* and *Asia minor*, *Phrygia* and *Pamphylia*, in *Egypt*, and in the parts of *Lybia*, about *Cyrene* and strangers from *Rome*; Jews and Profelytes, *Cretans* and *Arabians*; all equally heard the Apostles preach and publish, in their several Tongues, the wonderful works of God. How amazing must it have been to hear poor ignorant Fishermen, who had never travelled beyond

beyond *Judæa* and *Galilee*, in one moment SECT. VI.
 enabled to speak the several languages of so many different nations ! How powerfully must they have preach't the Gospel, when every Sentence they utter'd was a proof of their Doctrine, and proclaim'd the wonderful power of God ! Their speaking languages that they understood not before was as astonishing a proof of their being endued with a divine power, as their raising the dead. How inexcusable then were those scoffers who imputed the miraculous gift of speaking unknown Tongues, to *drunkenness* ? Cou'd the fumes of *new Wine* endue men with new knowledge ; and make them suddenly understand and speak languages that others acquire with much pains and study ? The mixt multitude of people from all nations were the most proper Judges of this miraculous gift : and they own'd that they heard and understood the Apostles preaching the wonderful works of God, in their several tongues. Besides, this wonderful Gift was not confined to the Apostles ; but afterwards conveyed to others. When *Peter* converted *Cornelius*, and preach't to him, and many other *Gentiles*, the Acts x. 27.
 gift of the Holy-Ghost was bestowed upon them all : *and they spake with tongues and magnify'd God.* v. 46. And when *Paul* had baptized twelve Disciples whom he found at *Ephesus*, Ch. xix. 1-6.
 and laid his hands on them, the Holy-Ghost came upon them ; and they *spake with Tongues and prophesied.* The same Gift was imparted to several in the Church of *Corinth* : and the Apostle, in his first epistle to the *Corinthians*, Ch. xiv.
 gave them particular directions concerning the orderly and *edifying* use of that wonderful gift. There cou'd be no possibility of mistake or fraud, in the use or conveyance of it. Every-
 one

SECT. VI. one who had it must have been conscious that this Gift was miraculous. And those who heard it used by persons whom they knew, might be morally certain that it was not *acquired*, but truly *supernatural*. When you come to consider these things coolly; and to consult with Mr. *W.* or his *Rabbi*, about a reply to them, I hope you will remember, that they were not done in a corner, nor among ignorant credulous people, who might easily be imposed on; but in the populous flourishing Citys of *Jerusalem*, *Ephesus* and *Corinth*; where, both among the priests, and people, there must have been men of parts and penetration, who were not only able, but forward and watchful, to detect any deceit or collusion in the Gift of Tongues. Nor was it a casual transient thing; but a *standing* Miracle; not ingross't by the Apostles, but imparted to many of their Converts; among whom, it was impossible that any trick or fraud shou'd be concealed. It was a Miracle absolutely necessary to the speedy and effectual propagation of the Gospel: for, without it, and the power of working other Miracles too, the Apostles cou'd no more have converted a great part of the World, than they cou'd have conquer'd it.

T. By the Gift of *speaking with Tongues*, St. *Luke* might mean no more than a Talent, or faculty of speaking foreign languages, that had been acquired before; and which the Disciples of *Jesus* then found themselves particularly inclined to exert before the numerous strangers they saw at *Jerusalem*. Divines generally suppose that none but the Apostles were endued with this Gift (or rather exerted it) on the day of Pentecost. But what St. *Luke* says may very well be apply'd to several of the other Disciples

ples that were mention'd in the foregoing SACT. VI.
chapter: among whom there might be some Acts i. 15.
that had travelled, and learn't one or other of
the languages spoken by the various Sorts of
strangers who were then at *Jerusalem*. It can-
not be supposed that *all* the Disciples understood
each of these different Tongues: but the first
person that spake to the people might use one
strange language; and the next, another. And
this they might do, partly out of ostentation, to
show their skill in foreign Tongues; (as it
seems to have been done among the *Corinthi-
ans*;) and partly from a desire to invite Stran-
gers of all sorts to come and hear their doc-
trine. Accordingly it happen'd that their
speaking in different languages drew a great
number of Strangers together; who were a-
mazed to hear *Galileans* (whom they supposed
never to have travelled) speaking in various
Tongues.

N. There is no reason to think that the
Gift of Tongues was bestowed at first upon
any besides the Apostles. *They* only are spo-
ken of in the close of the first Chapter of the
Acts: and of *them* only it can be meant that
they were all with one accord in one place: for, in
the 14th verse, it is said that *Peter stood up with* Acts ii. 1.
the Eleven, when in a calm, modest, pertinent,
rational, affecting Discourse he vindicated him-
self, and them, from the malicious charge of
their being *filled with new Wine* *. And it was
only by the Apostles that the Gifts of the Holy- Ch. viii.
14—18.

* See v. 37. where only the *Apostles* are mention'd: and
v. 32. where *ALL those* on whom the Holy-Ghost fell,
are called WITNESSES of *Christ's* resurrection; which
is one distinguishing part of the Apostolick character. See
MISCELLANEA SACRA. Vol. II. Essay II. pag.
16—29.

SECT. VI. Ghost was conveyed to others. The surprizing appearances that attended the descent of the Holy-Spirit upon the Apostles, showed evidently that their *speaking with tongues* cou'd not mean their exerting a common Gift or Talent that they had acquired before. A Sound from Heaven filled all the House where they were assembled : and there appeared cloven fiery Tongues that sat upon each of them, or hovered upon their heads. This was a miraculous proof of the reality of that supernatural Gift the Apostles were now endued with. *And they were all filled with the Holy-Ghost, and began [immediately] to speak with other Tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.* These last words show that the power of uttering or expressing their thoughts in unknown Tongues, was an immediate Gift of *the Spirit* they were now filled with.

T. St. *Luke* does not speak of *unknown Tongues* : He says they began to speak with *other Tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance* : that is, one or other of them spake in *other* languages than they commonly used. Each of them display'd his respective Gift ; and took this particular occasion to show his skill in speaking some foreign language ; as his *spirit*, or mind, enabled him to *utter* his thoughts.

N. You cannot but know, Sir, that St. *Luke's* words will not bear the Sense you wou'd force upon them. No thing can be more evident than that *the Spirit* which gave the Apostles *utterance*, is the very same *Holy-Spirit* with which they were now filled. The wonderful manner of conveying the Gift of Tongues manifestly proves that the Gift itself was truly miraculous : and that speaking in *other*,

other Tongues must necessarily mean their SECT. VI. speaking such foreign languages as they understood not before. What need cou'd there be of such wonderful appearances as attended the conveying this gift of Tongues, if it was really no Gift at all; and that the Apostles only express't themselves in Tongues they understood, (but seldom used,) before? This supposes that in their Speech or *utterance* they had no assistance at all from that *Holy-Spirit* with which they were filled. But the other supernatural Gifts with which the Apostles were likewise furnish't (particularly the power of working the same kind of Miracles that *Jesus* himself did,) prove the truth and reality of the wonderful Gift they now had of speaking foreign languages. Each of their Gifts confirm'd the truth of the other: and showed that they both spake and acted by a divine Power and Authority. And since the Gift of Tongues was not confined to the Apostles, but imparted to many others, both *Jews*, and Acts xix. 3. *Gentiles*, betwixt whom there was the greatest Ch. x. 45. 46. variance and opposition as to some of their Notions, Views, and Usages, even after their conversion to Christianity; this shows evidently that any collusion, or fraud in the Gift of Tongues was utterly impracticable.

M. If the Gift of speaking unknown Tongues, and the other Miracles said to have been wrought by the Apostles had been real, and free from all suspicion of fraud; the *Jews* must have been converted by it: and the Chief-priests and Pharisees, instead of persecuting and punishing the Apostles, wou'd have treated them with all the regard and veneration due to inspired Prophets.

SECT. VI. *N.* I accounted for the obstinate incredulity
 of the Chief-priests before. As for the com-
 mon people, great numbers of *them* were con-
 verted to the faith of *Christ*. When *Ananias*
 and *Sapphira* were suddenly struck dead (as St.
 Peter foretold they wou'd be) for attempting to
 deceive the Apostles ; and other Miracles were
 wrought by them ; *Multitudes both of men and*
women were added to the Lord. The word of
 God increased, and spread dayly. The number
 of Disciples multiply'd in Jerusalem greatly : and
 a great Company of the PRIESTS themselves
 became obedient to the Faith. I think it is very
 remarkable that the *Sadducees* were the men
 who now chiefly joyned with the High-priest
 in opposing and persecuting the Apostles. The
 rage and bigotry of the *Pharisees* began to
 abate. The advice that one of their Lead-
 ing-men gave to the Council of *Jerusalem* shows
 what favourable thoughts he had of the Apo-
 stles and their Doctrine. The conversion of
Saul, the greatest bigot among them, quite
 astonish't them, and confounded all their mea-
 sures. Afterward several other *Pharisees* be-
 lieved in *Jesus*. Soon after the Apostles were
 filled with the Gifts of the Holy-Ghost, the
 christian Converts in *Jerusalem* grew very nu-
 merous ; and the Common-people revered the
 Apostles so much, that the Captain of the
 Guards and the Officers of the Chief-priests
 were afraid of being stoned, when they carry'd
 them before the Council. After working many
 Miracles and converting multitudes of people
 to the Faith, they were imprisoned. But an
 angel of the Lord by night open'd the prison-
 doors, and brought them forth ; saying, go
 stand and preach in the Temple to all the peo-
 ple. Accordingly they enter'd into the temple
 early

Acts v.
 1—11.

v. 14.

Ch. vi. 7.

See Ch. iv. 1.
 and ch. v. 17.

Acts v. 4.

Ch. xv. 5.

Ch. v. 26.

v. 12, 15, 16.

v. 19.

early in the morning, and taught. When the Council met, and sent for the prisoners; the officers returned and told them that they found the prison *shut* with all safety, and the Guards standing without, before the doors; but that they found no person within. When the Council heard this, they began to doubt whereunto this wou'd grow. Then one came and told them, that the men they had imprison'd were in the Temple, teaching the people. So when they had sent for them, *without violence*, the High-priest said, "did not we strictly command you that ye shou'd not teach in the name of *Jesus*? Yet behold ye *have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine*, and intend to *bring this Man's blood upon US*." This shows a very surprizing change in the sentiments of the High-priest himself and his Council. They now began to doubt what might be the issue of this matter; and to fear that they had gone too far when they put *Jesus* to death. Then they cryed out with the people to have him crucify'd, and said, *his blood be upon us and upon our children!* Now they speak in another strain; and expostulate with the Apostles for intending to *bring the blood of Jesus upon THEM*; as if they had been ashamed of the Fact, and disown'd *their* being guilty of it. Cou'd they possibly have talkt in this manner to the Apostles, if they had thought that *Jesus* was justly put to death, or had question'd the truth of his Resurrection? In effect they vindicated his integrity, and condemn'd themselves, when they disown'd their being guilty of his *blood*. But Peter told them plainly that *THEY* slew *Jesus*, and *hanged him on a tree*; but that God had raised him up, and exalted him to his right hand; to be a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and

Mat. xxvii.

20, 25.

Luk. xxiii.

13, 18, 23.

SECT. VI. *remission of Sins.* When they heard *this*, they were cut to the heart, and (in their rage) took counsel to slay them. But *Gamaliel*, a Pharisee and Doctor of the Law, who was in great reputation among the people, advysed the Council to refrain from the Apostles: “let them alone (said he) lest haply ye shou’d be found even to fight against God. For if this Work [or, *Design*] be of Men, it will come to naught: But if it be from God, ye cannot overthrow it.” To this prudent advice they agreed. And when they had called in the Apostles, and beaten them, they charged them, not to preach in the name of *Jesus*. But they rejoiced in their sufferings: and continued still to teach *dayly* in the Temple. If you cou’d but calmly consider the character and conduct of the Apostles, the nature of their wonderful Gifts, and of the astonishing Miracles they wrought, you cou’d not question their testimony concerning the Resurrection and Ascension of *Jesus*: which are not to be look’t upon merely as miraculous *Facts*, but as points of *Belief*, as important in themselves as his incarnation, birth, life, and death. If *Jesus* actually rose from the dead, and ascended into Heaven, it was certainly possible to give sufficient proofs of it to the world, without his appearing to the Chief-priests, and Rulers. I ask then what better (or other) proofs the most obstinate Sceptick can require, than the Apostles actually gave of the resurrection and ascension of *Jesus*. For the certainty of these Facts, they, and hundreds of other persons, had all the evidence of their Senses: and they attested the truth of them amidst continual hazards, persecutions, stripes, imprisonment; all the hardships of life, and the terrors of death itself.

AA s v. 34,
38, 39.

AA s v. 41,
42.

itself. Throughout their conduct there appears the strictest Integrity and Virtue; Candour, Goodness, Temperance, Meekness, Contentment, Submission to the divine Will, Patience, and even Joy under their Sufferings; Forgiveness shown to their worst Enemys; a heavenly temper; an unfeign'd Contempt of the world, its Honours, Riches, and sensual Delights; a boundless Charity towards mankind; and an unweary'd Zeal in promoting their welfare and happiness. Such was the Character and behaviour of the Apostles. All that cou'd possibly be desired farther to render their Doctrine and their Testimony credible, was, that they shou'd be inabled to confirm the truth of both, by undoubted Miracles. This they did dayly. They were likewise endued with other wonderful Gifts; such as the power of *Prophecy*; of *discerning* the *Spirits* and thoughts of Men; and above all, a sufficient knowledge of Languages they had never heard or learnt. *Jesus* promised thus to furnish and qualify them for preaching and propagating the Gospel among all nations: and he punctually fulfill'd this *prophetick* promise. This alone was the most convincing proof of his Resurrection and Ascension. And we have seen too that the preaching of the Apostles was attended with suitable success. They wrought the most amazing Miracles, and converted many thousands at *Jerusalem* in a few days. Neither threats, nor stripes, nor the fear of Death discouraged them from doing their duty. They resolutely *obey'd* Acts v. 29. *God rather than Men*; and conquer'd all opposition. At length they travell'd into the most distant Regions: and in a few years they converted a great part of the World to the Faith of *Christ*. Now since it was certainly

SECT. VI. *possible* for *Jesus* to rise from the dead, and to ascend into Heaven, without appearing to the Chief-priests : and that it was equally possible for Almighty God to give sufficient proofs and assurance to the world of these Facts, *so circumstanced* : and since we *actually* have all the Evidence for them that cou'd be given, supposing they had been true ; it follows, that the truth of *Christ's* resurrection, and his Ascension into Heaven, is unquestionably establish'd with all the Evidence of demonstration.

Disc. vi. p. 26, M. False Miracles have been common things among Christians : and as the resurrection of *Jesus* is their grand and fundamental one ; so it is not at all difficult to account for the rise, propagation, and continuance of it. Why it has been believ'd thro' these latter ages of the Church is no wonder at all. The Priests had their interest in it. The ignorant and superstitious had their comfort in it. And the wise and considerate, for fear of persecution, durst not inquire into the grounds of it. The only difficulty is to know upon what principle the project and story of *Jesus's* resurrection was *at first* devysed. And whether it was *ambition*, or *revenge* upon the pharisaical Priesthood of the Jews, which prompted the Apostles to it, is all one to us. Such bad principles too often put men upon the most difficult and desperate attempts.

N. When you mention *Ambition*, or *Revenge* upon the Jewish Priesthood, as motives that might possibly influence the Apostles, and engage them in such a Fraud as you charge them with concerning the resurrection of *Jesus* ; you forget that they were *Jews* themselves ; educated in all the false notions and prejudices about a temporal *Messiah* ; and strongly prepossess'd in favour of the *Jewish worship*, and the *Pharisaical priesthood*. You must suppose

too that the Apostles devysed the Fraud of ^{SACT. VI.} *Jesus's* resurrection, before they had suffer'd any thing from the Chief-priests; or cou'd possibly entertain any *revenge* against them. When *Jesus* dyed, the Apostles were still *Jews* both as to their principles and practice. If they reckon'd him an Impostor, or were Cheats themselves, they cou'd not believe him to be the *Messiah*. Nor cou'd they for his sake abandon the notions and worship they had always embraced, to propagate the belief of a very different Doctrine, and of Facts that they knew to be false. *Revenge* therefore cou'd never be the motive of their Conduct. Neither cou'd *Ambition*, or any possible views of Honour or Fame, determin them to promote an imposture. They did not pretend to set up themselves as the *Heads* of a new Sect, or the *Inventers* of a new Religion. They profess't themselves to be only the *disciples* and followers of *Jesus* of *Nazareth*, who was crucify'd at *Jerusalem* as a malefactor. What *Honour* cou'd they hope for from adhering to *such* a Master? What *Credit* in the world by teaching his doctrine? How cou'd they possibly expect to be believed; or to meet with the least success? *Jesus* had told them they were to expect persecution, disgrace, contempt, and death itself, for preaching the Gospel. They look't for no other reception in the world. They actually met with this very treatment; and rejoyced that they were accounted worthy to suffer for their Master's sake. This was the only ambition that animated and influenced them. They sought for eternal *Glory*, *Honour*, and *Immortality*, by a *patient continuance in well-doing*. As for worldly honour and fame, they cou'd expect none. They were *set forth* (or, *exposed*) as a *spectacle* ^{1 Cor. iv.}

SECT. VI. *to the world ; both to Angels, and to Men : they were look't on as fools for Christ's sake ; and as weak men : they were despised, and treated as the filth of the world, and the offscouring (or refuse) of all men. They suffer'd hunger and thirst ; were naked and buffeted, persecuted, and defamed. Nor can it be pretended that they might have set-out with other views ; and were disappointed of their expectations.*

Mat. xxiii. For, *Jesus* forewarn'd them of the many tribulations that were to befall them. They were

34.
Ch. xxiv. 9. sure of meeting with the greatest opposition, reproaches, dishonour, and all sort of afflictions : and even *took pleasure in them.* In few words, their Conduct was quite opposite to that of Impostors. As they always taught, so they strictly practis'd, Sincerity, Candour, and every thing that is *just, or true, or lovely, or of good report.* And the undoubted Miracles that they wrought every-where gave such an additional force and confirmation to their testimony concerning the resurrection of *Jesus* ; that nothing but the utmost obstinacy, and most unaccountable prejudices can lead men to disbelieve it.

Joh. xvi. 2.
2 Cor. xii. 10.

M. Had *Jesus* after his resurrection appear'd publicly to his Crucifyers, it wou'd have been a more satisfactory and convincing proof of that important event, than all the Miracles that his Apostles wrought.

N. Supposing that after his Ascension he had appear'd to *Caiaphas* the High-priest alone, when he was going to hold a Council about punishing the Apostles ; and had upbraided him for his infidelity, and for persecuting his Disciples, wou'd not you have thought this a convincing proof of his resurrection ?

M. Yes :

M. Yes: but then the Rulers and Pharisees SECT. VI. must have depended upon the testimony of *Caiaphas*; which cou'd not have been so satisfactory as if they themselves had seen *Jesus*.

N. I cannot think that any-one cou'd have question'd the testimony of the High-priest concerning *Jesus's* appearing to him; even tho' he himself had been convinc'd by it, of the resurrection of *Jesus*; and had become his Disciple.

M. No doubt the testimony of the High-priest, such an implacable enemy; who first Joh. xi. 49-53. advys'd the Council to put *Jesus* to death, and was so active in getting him crucify'd, wou'd have gone a great way towards convincing the *Pharisees* and Rulers; and have been more readily believ'd than the joynt-testimony of the Apostles, and other Disciples of *Jesus*. But what signifys talking of what *might* possibly have been done?

N. I cannot but think that *Jesus's* miraculous appearing to *Saul*, while he was persecuting the Disciples, and his testimony concerning this Fact, is an additional proof of *Jesus's* resurrection, as strong and convincing as if he had appear'd to *Caiaphas* himself. For we have here a testimony given to it, by the most implacable restless Enemy that *Jesus* and his Doctrine ever had; I will not except *Caiaphas*, *Celsus*, *Porphry*, *Julian*, nor the greatest bigot among our *modern* Infidels.

M. That Conversion of *Paul* is one of the most surprizing Storys in all the New-Testament. And the worst of it is, that one does not know either how to believe, or how to reject it.

SECT. VI. N. What pretence can there be for disbelieving it? There is no antient Fact more certain. We have a Narrative of several of the most remarkable actions of his life, both before, and after, his conversion, written by St. Luke his companion and fellow-traveller; and confirm'd by numerous passages of his own *Epistles*. He was a Jew of *Tarsus*, in *Cilicia*; educated at *Jerusalem*, under *Gamaliel*; and being exceedingly zealous for the tradition of his Forefathers he became a rigid *Pharisee*; and the bitterest Enemy to the Disciples of *Jesus*.

Gal. i. 14. When the blood of *Stephen* was shed, he stood by, and consented to his death. He made havoc of the Church: and binding both men and women he deliver'd them into prison, and persecuted them to death. While engag'd in this course of wickedness, he thought he was discharging his duty; and doing God the greatest Service. And he was as truly sincere as any one cou'd be that labour'd under the strongest prejudices. He verily thought that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of *Jesus*. He shut up many of the Disciples in prison, and gave his vote against them when they were put to death. He punish't them often in every Synagogue; and compell'd them to blaspheme. And being exceedingly mad against them, he persecuted them into foreign Citys. While he thus breath'd out threatnings and slaughter against the Disciples of the Lord; and was travelling on the road to *Damascus* with a Commission from the High-priest to seize any of them he might find there, and bring them bound to *Jerusalem* to be punish't; at midday he was struck blind by a light from Heaven, that did no harm to those who were walking with him. And when he and they fell on the ground, he heard a voice speaking

Ag. xxii. 28.
Ch. viii. 3.
Ch. xxii. 4.
Ch. xxvi. 9, 10.
V. 11:
Ch. ix. 1.

speaking to him, and saying in the *Hebrew* SECT. VI.
 tongue, Saul, Saul, *why persecutest thou me?* 
 And when Saul said, who art thou Lord? he
 answer'd, *I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.* Acts ix. 6:
 Saul trembling and astonish't said, *Lord what*
wilt thou have me to do? "And the Lord said
 " to him, arise and go into the City, and it
 " shall be told thee what thou must do. I
 " have appear'd unto thee for this purpose to Ch. xxvi.
 " make thee a Minister and a Witness both 16—18.
 " of these things which thou hast seen, and
 " of those things in which I will appear [*sar-*
 " *ther*] unto thee; delivering thee from the
 " people, and from the *Gentiles*, to whom I now
 " send thee; to open their eyes; and to turn
 " them from darkness to light; and from the
 " power of Satan, unto God." When Saul
 open'd his eyes he cou'd not see; but was led
 by the hand to *Damascus*; and continued blind
 till *Ananias*, who was directed by a Vision to Acts ix.
 go and enquire for him, came to him, and 10—16.
 said, " Brother Saul, the Lord (even *Jesus* v. 17.
 " that appear'd to thee in the way as thou
 " camest,) hath sent me that thou might re-
 " ceive thy Sight, and be filled with the Holy-
 " Ghost. Then immediately there fell from
 " his eyes, as it had been scales: and he re-
 " ceived sight *forthwith*; and arose, and was
 " baptized. Then he straight-way preach't
 " *Christ* in the Synagogues, that he is the *Son*
 " of God. But all that heard him were ama-
 " zed, and said, is not this he that destroyed
 " them which called on this Name in *Jerusa-*
 " *lem*; and came hither with that intent that
 " he might bring them bound unto the Chief-
 " priests?" When he return'd to *Jerusalem*
 some time after this, he endeavour'd to joyn Acts ix. 26
 himself to the Disciples: but they were all
 afraid of him; and believ'd not that he was a
 Disciple;

SECT. VI. *Disciple*; till *Barnabas* brought him to the Apostles, and declared unto them that he *had seen the Lord* in the way to *Damascus*; that *Jesus* had *spoken* to him: and that he had boldly preach't there in the name of *Jesus*. You see this surprizing conversion of *Saul* was attended with a train of miraculous Events. He was struck blind by the same light from Heaven that did no harm to those who were clost by him; tho' they saw it as well as he. *Jesus* appear'd and *spake* to him. The rest heard the voice, but saw no person. A divine Vision seen both by *Saul* and *Ananias* at the same time, tho' in different places, brought them together. Scales fell from *Saul's* eyes as soon as *Ananias* laid his hands on him; and he *immediately* received his sight. So that there were *several* miracles wrought on this occasion. How convincing was the testimony that such an inveterate Enemy as *Saul*, now gave to the resurrection of *Jesus*. Here cou'd be no possible suspicion of fraud, or mistake: nor the least pretence for disbelieving *Saul's* unquestionable Evidence. It confirm'd the testimony of the of the other Apostles; and gave the most powerful attestation to the truth of the Gospel.

M. I own there is something very unaccountable in this story. But if we were to examin all the circumstances, and differing accounts of it that we find in the *Acts*; it wou'd not appear quite so wonderful as you represent it. I am not prepared at present, to search this matter to the bottom; having never heard so much stress laid upon it before. But if you consider that *Paul* was a Visionary, you cannot think it strange that he should on his Journey to *Damascus* see, and hear, *Jesus* in such a vision
or

or dream as he had afterwards in the Temple; SECT. VI. and fancy it to be a *reality*: and, upon this Vision, change his Views and Conduct; and become a disciple of *Jesus*.

N. Such divine visions as that which *Paul* had in the Temple were truly miraculous and supernatural; and in one sense, *real*: I mean that those who saw such visions had some sure criterion or other, by which they easily distinguish't them from *dreams*, or strong efforts of imagination. And when these visions related to subsequent Facts, their truth was then confirm'd even to *Others*. Of this kind were the visions of *Cornelius*, and *Peter*: that too of * *Ananias*, Acts xxii. 17, 18. and *Saul's* during his blindness. In such cases the *Appearances* spoken of are expressly called *visions*: the persons that have them are said to be in a *trance*, or asleep: their eyes are shut: and the circumstances they are placed in, readily distinguish such divine Visions, from real Facts. There cou'd not possibly be any such *vision* in the case of *Saul's* conversion. He was travelling to *Damascus*; and saw the dazzling Splendour that blinded him, at *noon day*. Those who were *walking* with him saw it as well as he. And *they heard the voice* too, that spake to *Saul*; tho' they might not * *understand* (or *distinctly* hear) every thing that was said. A mere vision cou'd neither strike *Saul* blind; nor restore his Sight three days after. The reality of *Jesus's* appearing to him is con-

* In *Acts* xxii. 9. τὰς δὲ φωνὰς οὐκ ἔγνωσαν should be render'd —but they did not understand the Speech. . . They certainly heard the voice: as appears from *Acts* ix. 7. αἰνοῦν signifiys sometimes to *understand*; as in 1 *Cor.* xiv. 2. *Gal.* iv. 21. *Jesus* spake to *Saul* in the *Hebrew* Tongue, which his fellow-travellers might not *understand*.

SECT. VI. firm'd by the glorious circumstances, and miraculousevents that attended it: and these again are farther attested by those who were with him; and the concurring testimony of *Ananias*. Nothing less than the most irresistible conviction cou'd have produced such a wonderful change. *Saul's* prejudices against *Jesus* and his Doctrine seem to have been so inveterate, that nothing but a miracle wrought upon *himself* cou'd convert him. Seeing he was brought up at *Jerusalem*, he had probably heard *Jesus*; and must either have seen some of his Miracles, or have been credibly inform'd of them; and of those which the Apostles wrought. Yet these had no influence upon him. But when *Jesus* himself appear'd, to him in *Glory*, and spake to him in the manner He did; he cou'd no longer resist that divine power which he now felt. He is convinced, and converted. His Thoughts, and Views, and Temper are intirely changed: and instead of breathing out threatenings and slaughter against others; he now breathes only love, mildness, patience, condescension, and a sincere benevolence towards all mankind. His excellent sense, and consciousness itself, (which gives the utmost certainty) secured him from being deceived in the miraculous events that attended his Conversion. His behaviour even *before*, was a proof of his acting according to the dictates of his Conscience, then bias't, and fatally misguided, by prejudices almost invincible. And every step of his life *after* his conversion, shows how upright and sincere he was in spreading the knowledge of the Gospel, throughout the world. The wonderful manner of his being called to the Apostleship by *Jesus* himself, set him upon the

the level with the other Apostles. And his being endued with the same power of Miracles, and other Gifts of the Spirit that they had, enabled him successfully to propagate that Doctrine which he had formerly opposed, with so much bitter zeal, and outrageous violence. The Conclusion we must now draw from the various and undoubted Facts I have laid before you, is, that the Resurrection and Ascension of *Jesus* are as unquestionably true as the Miracles that were wrought by the Apostles; and the wonderful *Conversion* of *Paul*: that is, they are as credible and certain as any thing recorded in History can be. For, since *Jesus* after his death, not only endued his Apostles with a miraculous power, and other supernatural Gifts, according to his promise; but afterwards appear'd *personally* and spake to *Paul* at his Conversion; we are thence infallibly assured, that *Jesus* rose from the dead, and ascended into Heaven; and that the testimony of the Apostles concerning these Facts, and the doctrine of the Gospel, is undoubtedly true. We are therefore sure that *Jesus* is the *Messiah*, or the *Son of God*: and that he was sent from Heaven to reveal the Almighty's will to mankind.

M. You have almost preach't me asleep. I must bid you good night.

T. Let us have your Company one half hour more, Sir: there is a point of importance still to be examin'd; *viz.* how far the Miracles of *Jesus* are a proof of his divine Mission.

M. In his first *Discourse*, Mr. *W* has clearly shown that the miracles of healing all manner of bodily diseases which *Jesus* was so justly famed for are not a sufficient proof of his divine

SECT. VI. vine Authority to found and introduce a religion into the world.

N. When we appeal to the Miracles of *Jesus* as a proof of his divine Mission; we do not mean those Miracles only which he wrought in *healing all manner of bodily diseases* (as Mr. *W*'s assertion seems to suppose,) nor yet his casting out Devils; or doing any other particular Sort of Miracles: but his doing *all sorts*, on all occasions; the most publick, beneficial, undoubted Miracles; such as raising the dead; feeding thousands with a few loaves and fishes; and the like: which cou'd not possibly be effected without the immediate interposition of th' Almighty's power. Mr. *W*. grants that "the restoring a person indisputably dead to life, is a stupendous Miracle: and that two or three such Miracles well circumstanced, and credibly reported, are *enough* to perswade mankind that the Author of them was a divine Agent, and invested with the power [*and consequently, with the Authority*] of God." Now since I have shown you that *Jesus* wrought many *such* Miracles, well circumstanced, and credibly attested; it follows, that he was a divine Agent, and truly invested with the power of God: and that therefore he had Authority to declare and reveal the Almighty's Will to mankind; or to *introduce a Religion into the world*.

M. He himself foretold that *false Christs* and *false Prophets* would arise, and work Miracles. St. *Paul* says the same of *Antichrist*, or the *Man of Sin*. How then can we distinguish the *true Prophet* from the *false*; or the *true Christ*, from *Antichrist*, by Miracles?

N. The

N. The true *Christ*, and true Prophets, may be known and distinguisht from *false* ones, not merely by their wonderful works; but by the reasonableness and good tendency of their Doctrine; the integrity of their Life and conduct; the nature, design, and circumstances of their Miracles; and their *appealing* to them as a proof and testimony of their divine Mission.

(1.) If false Prophets teach absurd or immoral Doctrine, Reason and Common-sense show that it cannot come from God: and that therefore their works (however *wonderful* they may *seem*) cannot be wrought by the divine power. *Reason* is the original and universal Revelation that God makes of his Will to mankind: and we are sure, *that* Doctrine, which plainly contradicts Reason, cannot possibly come from God; nor be proved by any sort of Miracles: because all the manifestations of his Will whether by Reason, or Revelation, must be uniform, and consistent one with the other. Without inquiring therefore whether the works that the Teachers of *absurd* or *immoral* Doctrine do, be really miraculous; we reject their Authority and Doctrine; and know them to be *false* Prophets. (2.) Tho' the Doctrine shou'd appear rational, or not manifestly absurd; yet if the Prophet be vicious, and insincere: if he be enslaved to Lust, Ambition, or other wicked habits, and does not live up to the rules of Virtue and Probity that the light of Reason recommends to all men; there is good ground to suspect his being a false Prophet; to reject his Doctrine, and question the truth of his pretensions. (3.) False Prophets may be readily distinguisht by their false and counterfeit Miracles; by their tricks and artifices: their *lying* (or deceiving) *wonders* as St. Paul calls them,

and

SECT. VI. and all * manner of unrighteous deceit. His description of *Antichrist* and his Miracles, agree so exactly to the ambitious arrogant claims of the *Pope*, and the gross cheats and pious frauds of the *Romish Church*; that we cannot help thinking the Apostle had *them* in his view, when he wrote that remarkable passage of his Epistle to the *Thessalonians*. Now as the impostures of *Simon Magus*, *Mahomet*, and all other false Prophets might easily be discover'd by the falshood either of their *Doctrine*, their *Conduct*, or their *Miracles*; and generally by all these three marks, *absurd Doctrine*, *unrighteous Conduct*, and *false Wonders*: So on the other hand, a true Prophet is known and distinguish't by the reasonableness and good tendency of his *Doctrine*; the integrity of his *Character*; and the unquestionable truth of his *Miracles*. By these three Marks of Truth and Credibility the Miracles of *Jesus* were manifestly distinguish't from the works of false Prophets. His *Doctrine* was intirely rational, wise and consistent; worthy of God to reveal; and fit for men to receive and practise. His *Conduct* was righteous, prudent, exemplary, and irreproachable. His *Miracles* were numerous, publick, charitable, various, occasional, and most astonishing. And he not only declared that he was sent from Heaven to reveal the will of God to mankind; but on the most publick and solemn occasions, he † appeal'd to his wonderful Works as an evidence and testimony of his divine Mission.

2 Thes. ii.
3—12.

* This seems to be the meaning of that *hebraism* of St. Paul's, πᾶσι ἀπὸ τῆς ἀδικίας. 2 Thes. ii. 10.

† See Luk. v. 24. Joh. xi. 40.—43. ch. ix. 3, 4. ch. x. 24, 25, 32, 37, 38. ch. xiv. 10, 11.

M. History affords us instances of Men such as *Apollonius Tyanæus*, *Vespasian*, and *Greatrex* the Irish *Stroaker*, who have miraculously cured Diseases to the admiration of mankind; as well as *Jesus*. But if any of them, or any other greater worker of Miracles than they were shou'd withall assume to himself the title of a Prophet, and Author of a new Religion; I humbly conceive we ought not to give heed to him.

N. Neither *Apollonius*, *Vespasian*, nor *Greatrex*, ever pretended to be sent from God to deliver any scheme of Religion, or important Truths to the World. So that we need not inquire whether their Works were truly miraculous. For; if they were; nothing cou'd be inferr'd from it, to render the Miracles of *Jesus* less credible; or a less valid proof of his divine Authority. When Miracles are wrought by those who do not pretend to come from God, or to act in his name; all that such Miracles can prove, is, that there are invisible Agents who are able to do such surprizing things as far exceed the natural powers and abilities of Men. And in such cases, it is the same thing to us whether such wonderful Works are wrought by good Spirits, or by Evil ones: for in either case, they are done by the divine permission: and, besides the unknown ends of providence that may be served by them, one design of them may be to alarm wicked and sceptical men; and to convince them that there are Spirits, or invisible Agents, whose power, designs, and actions are limited, and restrain'd by the infinitely superior power, and wise providence of God. If either *Apollonius*, or *Vespasian* had taught any scheme of Doctrine or Duty, as the will of God; and had appeal'd

SECT. VI. to their wonderful Works as an evidence of their Mission; it wou'd have been necessary to have examin'd the reasonableness and tendency of their Doctrine; the integrity of their Character; and the nature and truth of their Miracles: and by these three Marks it wou'd have evidently appear'd whether they were true Prophets, or false. But since they did not pretend to be sent from God to reveal his will to mankind; we are under no obligation to inquire into the nature of their Miracles, or the credibility of those Historians who have related them. It does not appear from credible History that any false Prophet who pretended to come from God, ever appeal'd to Miracles as a proof of his divine Mission; or was permitted to work *true* and *unquestionable* Miracles. And we may be sure that no Impostor who pretends to divine Authority, and *appeals* to his works for the proof of his Doctrine, will ever be permitted to confirm such false pretences, by *true* Miracles. For by permitting this, the Almighty wou'd seem to set his Seal to a lye; and to lay men under a moral necessity of believing dangerous Errors, and the vilest Impostures.

T. Doth not the *Pope*, and the *Romish* Clergy *appeal* to Miracles wrought in their Church, as a proof that she is the only true Church; and that they teach the true doctrine of *Jesus*?

N. I never heard, or read of any of their Miracles so well attested as to deserve credit. Most of their wonders are wrought by their Priests, in the dark corners of Chappels and Cloysters; before ignorant credulous people: who if they doubted of such pretended Miracles, or detected the cheat in them, dared not discover it to others, for fear of being tortured,

tured, or starved, in the Inquisition: The liquefaction of harden'd blood, the sweating of Statues, an Image's bowing its head, or a voice from behind an Altar, are such gross silly cheats as will not now pass in the world for Miracles; even among the Papists themselves. Nor is there any thing miraculous in the surprising Cures that they so much boast of. If some sick people that have used proper remedies for their recovery, happen to pray before a particular Crucifix or Image; or to kiss the Pope's toe; or to hang some relick, or holy trinket, about their neck or wrist, upon, or near the day that their gradual recovery (after a natural method of Cure) begins; this is enough to make the cure pass for a *Miracle*: the Medicine, or proper Diet, is forgot; and the wonderful Cure is imputed to the superstitious practice of the credulous Devotee. But if *real* Miracles were wrought by the Pope, or his Emissarys, nothing cou'd be inferr'd from it in favour of their doctrine, or worship; because, (1.) We are absolutely certain that the *Romish* Doctrine is contrary to Scripture, and Reason, and Common-Sense: I say, we are more certain of this than we cou'd possibly be of any Miracle that the Popish Priests might pretend to work. And therefore we are sure that their Doctrine is such as Almighty God *cannot* approve of, nor confirm by Miracles. (2.) No person of the *Romish* Communion that is said to have wrought Miracles, ever pretended to an immediate Commission from God to reveal his Will, or to teach the world any *new* Doctrine, or important Truth. On the contrary, they assure us that they maintain no other Tenets than what are agreeable to Scripture; and were from the beginning taught by

SECT. VI. *Christ* and his Apostles. But since *Antichrist* and false Prophets may work *deceiving Wonders*, and perhaps *true Miracles*; the *Romish Church* has no other way to convince the world that her pretended Miracles are really wrought by the power of God; but by appealing to the *reasonableness* of her *Doctrine*; and to the *Scriptures*, and primitive *Antiquity*, to show that she really teaches the doctrine of *Jesus*. Now since it manifestly appears, to every impartial Inquirer, that her doctrine is contrary to Reason, and Sense, Scripture, and Antiquity; it necessarily follows, that Popish Miracles whether they be *lying Wonders*, or *real ones*, are only a confirmation and accomplishment of the Prophecys made by our blessed *Saviour* and *St. Paul*, concerning *Antichrist* and false Prophets: and consequently that the Miracles of the *Romish Church* (supposing them to be *real*) are a proof only of the Doctrine, and divine Authority of *Christ* and his Apostles. But, (3.) Tho the *Romish* writers urge the pretended Miracles wrought in their Church, as a proof of her being the true Church, and her teaching the true doctrine of *Christ*; this is not such an appeal as one commission'd by God to establish a new doctrine, or to confirm the truth of Doctrine already received, ought to make. Popish Missionarys, ought to work their Miracles in *Protestant* Countrys, (where the truth of them may be freely and safely examin'd,) if they mean to convince Protestants: and not put us off with *jesuitical* Storys of what *Xavier* did in *Japan*. And, before they work some undoubted Miracle, they shou'd appeal to it as a proof of their divine Authority. Thus *Jesus* did when he cured the Paralytick; and when he rais'd *Lazarus*. *Moses* did so too,

not only in the Case of *Pharaoh*; but when SECT. VI. he wrought the most * astonishing of all his Miracles: and so did *Elijah*. If Papists wou'd Kin. xviii. 36—38. give the world a convincing proof, by Miracles, that their Doctrine is the very same that *Jesus* taught; we will not require of them to raise some dead heretick to life: let them only work some undoubted Miracle upon a Protestant; such as curing the dropfy, palsy, or obstinate lameness, in a moment; before a sufficient number of unsuspected witnesses; and before they begin, let them *appeal* to the Miracle they are going to work as a proof of their acting by the power and authority of God, to confirm the truth of the *Romish* Doctrine. And when they work such a Miracle so circumstanced, and *previously* appeal'd to; they may then pretend to have proved the truth of their doctrine by Miracles. But since it is impossible that Almighty God shou'd set the Seal of true Miracles to pernicious Errors; or suffer an undoubted Miracle to be wrought, after such an *appeal*, made to it, for confirming any falshood, or imposture; we are sure that the *Romish* Church will never pretend to work such Miracles; nor previously appeal to them for the truth of her Doctrine: and therefore her Doctrine never can be proved by Miracles.

M. The power of doing Miracles is no Disc. 1. p. 12. certain nor rational Seal of the Commission and Authority of a divine Law-giver. There are various Gifts of the Spirit, as *St. Paul* tells us: “for to one is given by the Spirit, the 1 Cor. xii. 8—11. Word of Wisdom: to another the Word

* See Numb. xvi. 28—35. ch. xvii. 5.

SECT. VI. “ of Knowledge: to another the Gifts of
 “ Healing: to another, the working of Mi-
 “ racles: to another, Prophecy: to another,
 “ the discerning of Spirits; to another di-
 “ verse kind of Tongues; to another, the
 “ interpretation of Tongues.” Now since these
 Gifts may be given separately; it is very in-
 conclusive and false reasoning, to argue that a
 man who has one of these Gifts must have
 the other; that is, that because he has the
 gift of Healing, and of working Miracles;
 therefore he must have the Gift of Wisdom, or
 of Prophecy, or of discerning of Spirits. And
 yet this is the reasoning of your modern Wri-
 ters who wou’d prove *Jesus’s* authority to found
 a Religion, from his Miracles.

N. This Objection supposes that *all* the Gifts
 of the Spirit are as necessary as the Power of
 Miracles, to qualify a Person to be the revealer
 of God’s will to mankind. But this supposi-
 tion is quite groundless. *Moses* had not half of
 those supernatural Gifts *St. Paul* speaks of:
 yet he gave the *Jews* sufficient proofs of his
 acting by divine Authority. All that cou’d
 be absolutely necessary to prove this, was his
 working many publick unquestionable Mira-
 cles. When besides this, Almighty God thinks
 fit to distinguish any person by other wonder-
 ful endowments; such as the Gift of Prophecy;
 of discerning of Spirits, or the like; these other
 Gifts make the truth of his divine Mission ap-
 pear the more evident and indisputable: but
 they do not render the power of Miracles an
 uncertain or insufficient proof of a person’s
 acting by divine Authority. The testimony
 of twelve Witnesses adds a greater degree of
 Evidence to any Fact that they certainly know,
 and

and solemnly testify, than the testimony of only SECT. VI. one credible witness, or two. But still the greater Evidence, tho' preferable when it can be had, does not render the other insufficient, or unsatisfactory. The case is the same as to a Prophet's being endued with other supernatural Gifts, besides the power of Miracles. Other Gifts add still a higher degree of Evidence as to his Mission; as *fifty* Miracles prove it more convincingly than *ten*: but still Ten (or even fewer) unquestionable Miracles wou'd be a sufficient proof of his acting by divine Authority. Besides; they who prove from the Miracles of *Jesus* that he had Authority from God, to *found* a new Religion; do not infer from this *one* supernatural Gift of working Miracles, that he *had* all others: but from his showing manifestly that he possess't all the Gifts of the Spirit in a *superlative* degree, (as Mr. *W.* himself acknowledges,) they rightly Dis. I. p. conclude that he had all the qualifications that ^{13.} cou'd be required to fit him for the exalted Offices he was called to. In the passage you quote, St. *Paul* speaks of the different Gifts that were bestowed upon many of the primitive Christians: of whom Mr. *W.*'s reasoning holds true, that there was no necessity that any two or more of these Gifts shou'd meet in one man. But neither is it necessary that they should always be separately conveyed. The *Apostles* seem to have had all those Gifts. *Jesus* evidently proved that he possess't them in the highest degree. Tho' there were *diversity*s of Gifts, the same 1 Cor. xii. 4. Spirit was the author of them all. And that 2 Cor. iii. 17, 18. Spirit was the Spirit of the Lord. It was not given unto him by *measure*, or in a determinate Joh. iii. 34. degree and proportion only, as it was to others:

SECT. VI. it influenced and * *animated* him *always*. He gave the most convincing proofs of his being endued with all the divine Gifts of the Spirit : not only the *Gift of healing* all manner of Diseases, and *working* all other *Miracles* ; but the Gifts of divine *Wisdom*, and *Prophecy*, and supernatural *Knowledge* ; and *discerning* the *Spirits* of other men, and discovering their secret thoughts and intentions. Nay *Jesus* not only possess't all these Gifts ; but had the power of conveying them to his Disciples. And after Acts ii. 33. his Ascension, he made good his promise to them ; and bestow'd on them the wonderful Gifts of the *Holy-Ghost* : which was a demonstration that he was commission'd by Almighty God, to be the Revealer of his Will, and the *Author of a Religion*.

Disc. 1. p. 12. M. You might as well say that the strongest man is the wisest ; or that a good physician must needs be a good casuist ; as that *Jesus*, because he was a worker of Miracles, such as his are, and a healer of all manner of diseases, ought to be received as the guide of our Consciences, the director of our Understandings, and the Author of a Religion.

N. The same fallacy runs through all your Friend's reasoning on this point. If *Jesus* had been endued only with the Gifts of healing all diseases, and working other Miracles ; this alone wou'd have been a sufficient proof of his divine Mission. But besides these he had the Gifts of *Prophecy*, of supernatural *Knowledge*, See Sect. V. p. 257, 8, 9. and heavenly *Wisdom*. So that he had all the qualifications that were requisite to render him

* Compare Luk. i. 35. *πνεῦμα ἅγιον*—a holy Spirit—with ch. iv. 1. and with Rom. i. 3, 4. Acts ii. 33. Gal. iv. 6. Phil. i. 19. Heb. ix. 14. 1 Pet. i. 11, &c.

an Author and Institutor of Religion : and he SECT. VI. gave the world the most convincing proofs of his being appointed of God to reveal his will to mankind. You will grant, I hope, that God ought to be *received as the Guide of our Consciences*, and the *Director of our Understandings* : and that he can not only impart to another person such a measure of his divine Power, Wisdom, and other Perfections as may effectually qualify him for the same office ; but inable him to give sufficient proofs to the world, by the Gifts of Prophecy, and Miracles, and supernatural Knowledge, that he is called and appointed of God to be the revealer of his Will, and *the director of Our Understandings*. Either then you must affirm that God *cannot* reveal his Will to Mankind ; or furnish another person with such Gifts and Powers as may qualify him for that Office ; and inable him to give convincing proofs of it to the world : or if you grant this to be possible, you must allow that *Jesus* was appointed of God to be the Revealer of his Will ; because he gave all the proofs of it that cou'd be given, supposing he had been divinely called to that office. Having occasionally mention'd most of those proofs already, I need only add here, that no Impostor cou'd ever show, or pretend, that all the Titles, Marks, and Characters, of the *Messiah*, foretold by the antient Prophets, were truly fulfill'd in him. They center'd in *Jesus* alone : and were punctually accomplish'd by his Incarnation, his Birth, and Life, his Doctrine and Miracles, his Death, Resurrection, and Ascension ; the Calling of the *Gentiles*, and the successful propagation of the Gospel among them. The Prophecys point to *One Person*, the *Messiah*, whom the *Jews* expected

SECT. VI. expected about the time when *Jesus* was born. To him alone did all these Prophecys agree : nor can any Deceiver pretend to fulfil them. And I cannot but add, that no Impostor *can* renounce all worldly Advantages and Enjoyments ; practise every Virtue ; and set others a perfect example of Justice, Candour, Humility, Benevolence, and every thing that is good and praise-worthy, as *Jesus* did, throughout the whole course of his life. Far less will an Impostor not only chuse to live under poverty, persecutions, disgrace, and contempt ; but resolutely seal and confirm his seeming Integrity, and the truth of his pretensions, by *voluntarily* submitting himself to a series of *foreseen*, inconceivable sufferings, and all the anguish of a publick, lingering, ignominious death. You see, Sir, that besides the many publick, charitable, undoubted Miracles that *Jesus* wrought ; we have other convincing proofs of his divine Mission and Authority : namely the excellence, reasonableness and perfection of his Doctrine ;—his upright, disinterested, generous Conduct, and boundless Goodness towards Mankind ;—the accomplishment of all the antient Prophecys concerning the *Messiah* in his person ;—his giving the most evident proofs of his being endued with supernatural knowledge ;—his plain, express, circumstantial predictions concerning many contingent improbable Events, which were duely accomplish't ; and particularly as to his Resurrection, Ascension, and bestowing the wonderful Gifts of the Holy-Spirit upon his Apostles ;—and the speedy successful propagation of his Gospel, by the most unpromising Instruments, in spite of the greatest opposition from the Power, and Learning, the Bigotry and

and Superstition, the Wit and Malice, the Persecutions and inveterate prejudices both of the *Jews*, and *Heathen*. Each of these proofs will have its due weight and influence upon every attentive unprejudiced Mind. *Some* of them, even consider'd separately, must be own'd to be conclusive and satisfactory. But when they are view'd together, (as they shou'd always be,) I think the concurring Evidence of *Jesus's* divine Authority, arising from these various proofs, is so irresistibly strong, that it cannot be rejected, or doubted of, by any but those who are byass't and blinded by the grossest, and most unaccountable prejudices.

M. Gentlemen, I must take my leave of you. *Mr. N.* It is pity you had not a good Cause to defend. You have said more in defence of *Jesus's* Miracles than I expected from any one. But notwithstanding the plausible Answers you have made to smaller Difficultys; *Mr. W's* main Objections are still invincible; and will ever be so. I wish you good night.

N. I shou'd reckon the conversion of *Mr. M.* as wonderful as *St. Paul's*. I verily believe that a Miracle wrought upon himself cou'd not convince him. If *Jesus* were to appear to him, as he did to the Apostle, in a train of wonders, he wou'd distrust his Senses; cavil at the most undoubted Miracles; and continue an unbelieving Bigot to the last. With what an air of scorn and triumph did he go-off, as if he thought *Mr. W's* objections still unanswerable! Indeed it was not with any hopes of convincing him that I enter'd into such a tedious examination of the Difficultys and Cavils they insist on: but to show you, Sir, that there is
I
nothing

SECT. VI. nothing in Mr. *W*'s Discourses of such weight
 as you seem'd to imagin.

T. I am much obliged to you, Sir, for the pains you have taken : but tho' I have a more favourable opinion of *Jesus*'s Miracles than I had, I cannot but own that you have rather confuted Mr. *W*, than fully convinced me of the truth of the Gospel.

N. Do you think that the Miracles which *Jesus* wrought, do not sufficiently prove the truth of his Doctrine?

T. If I cou'd see sufficient reason to believe the *Facts* related in the Gospels, I shou'd not scruple to receive the doctrine of *Jesus* ; especially the moral and practical parts of it. But throughout your Debate with Mr. *M*, you have only *supposed* the truth and genuine Authority of the Gospels ; that they were really written by the persons whose names they bear ; and that they contain a faithful account of the Life, Doctrine, and Miracles of *Jesus*.

N. I was unavoidably led to suppose this : because most of his objections were founded upon some circumstances of the Miracles recorded in the Gospels : and by arguing thence against the miraculousness, or the credibility of such Facts, he himself was supposed to grant that *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, and *John* really wrote the Gospels : and that they contain the very same account of *Christ*'s Miracles and Doctrine, which Christians of all ages have believed to be genuine. You may remember, Sir, that before we began our debate, he agreed to allow as much credit to the testimony of the Evangelists, as to other credible Historians, in all things that are not absurd and contradictory. Nor cou'd he reasonably refuse this. Besides, I had occasion throughout our debate
 briefly

briefly to suggest several proofs of the integrity of the Apostles and Evangelists, and the credibility of the Gospels: so that I have not merely *supposed*, but really *proved* the truth of them; tho' in a much conciser way than such an important point deserves to be treated of. But have you any more reason to question whether the four Gospels were written by *Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John*; than you have to doubt whether *Suetonius, Tacitus, and Pliny*, wrote the Books that pass under their names?

T. No: I cannot say that I have any particular reason to question the genuineness of the Gospels, more than the works of those other Authors. But I want such a short and satisfactory proof of this important Truth (which indeed is the foundation of Christianity) as Infidels cannot reasonably contradict.

N. What proof can you expect of such a Fact? You have the same Evidence for it that you have for other things of the like nature. You have the constant and general consent of Christians of all *Ages, Nations, and Partys*; and even of *Jews and Heathens* too: who tho' they violently opposed the progress of Christianity, both by reasoning, and ridicule, and all the methods that Wit, and Rage, Malice and Subtlety cou'd devyse; yet they never question'd whether the Gospels were written by those persons whose names they bear. Nor did they ever deny the truth of the principal Facts contain'd in the *Gospels and Acts*: namely, that *Jesus* lived in *Galilee*: that he taught his doctrine not only there, but in *Judæa*, and several other places: that he wrought Miracles wherever he went: and was crucify'd at *Jerusalem*; and that his Apostles and other Disciples declared

SECT. VI.  clared they conversed with him after his resurrection, and saw him ascend into Heaven : that they believed and preach't the Doctrines and Facts related in the Gospels ; and against all opposition, firmly propagated the belief of them throughout the world. *Matthew, Mark and Luke*, publish't their Gospels while several of the Apostles were alive. And *John* last of all wrote his Gospel as a Supplement to the other three ; and thereby added his sanction to their truth and authority. As soon as the Gospels were composed, many Copys of them must have been made and dispersed for the use not only of the publick assemblys of Christians, but of private persons : who cou'd not but set the highest value upon these sacred Writings ; and read, transcribe, and preserve them with the utmost care and exactness. We find that the Attempts of such as endeavoured to corrupt them, were immediately and successfully opposed : so that we cannot reasonably doubt of their being handed down to us, without any *material* alteration. It was one good effect of the divisions and different opinions among the several Sects and Partys that arose early in the Christian Church, that they were equally jealous and watchful, one of the other. They all agreed in appealing to the Scriptures as the sole Standard of Truth : and showed their mutual vigilance and zeal for preserving them uncorrupted. And tho' in some important Texts there are various Readings in different MSS, occasioned at first either by mistake, or design ; yet the genuine Texts may still be discover'd, by comparing the *most antient* Manuscripts and Versions together : *which* every judicious Critick will prefer before more modern ones, when he judges of any suspected or spurious Passage. T. We

T. We find that spurious *Gospels*, *Acts* and *Epistles* were publish't in the names of the Apostles, almost as soon as those you reckon genuine. And it is not easy to imagin how the *true* *Gospels* were distinguish't from the *false*. SECT. VI.

N. Since three of the *Gospels*, and the Book of the *Acts* were publish't, while several of the Apostles, and other immediate Disciples of *Jesus*, were alive; they cou'd not have been received as *genuine*, if they had not been approved and recommended by the Apostles: who at the same time must have condemned and rejected the *spurious* *Gospels*, as soon as they appear'd. Nor have we only *their* Approbation and Judgment to rely upon; but the undoubted testimony of many Thousands of christian Converts; who having heard the doctrine of *Jesus* and his Apostles, from their own mouth; and seen their *Miracles*; cou'd not but know whether the three first *Gospels* were approved by the Apostles; and contain'd the very same account of *Christ's* life and miracles, and the same doctrine which they had often heard either *Jesus*, or his Apostles, teach and explain. And if we add to all this, that not only the Apostles, but great numbers of their Converts, who knew and testify'd the truths contain'd in the *Gospels*, sealed their testimony with their blood; it cannot be deny'd that we have all the evidence for the truth of Christianity, and the genuine authority of the *Gospels*, that can reasonably be desired.

T. Supposing that the *Gospels*, as we now have them, had undergone no material alteration; how can we be sure that the Evangelists themselves (whoever they were) have left us a faithful account of the Discourses and Miracles

SECT. VI. *racles of Jesus: and that they were not credulous, or mistaken?*

N. You wou'd scarce be pleased with the common and *proper* answer to this query; that the Evangelists were all divinely inspired; and thereby secured from Error or Mistakes. This Answer wou'd unavoidably lead one of your sceptical humour to farther questions; and ingage us in a dispute that we have not time to go through. Waving therefore that answer at present; I shall only put you in mind, that the Gospels wou'd be intirely credible, even supposing the Authors of them had not been divinely inspired: seeing Integrity alone, will qualify persons of common-sense to give a plain and fair account of things that they certainly know to be true. Two of the Evangelists, *Matthew*, and *John*, were the Apostles and constant Companions of *Jesus*; who themselves saw and heard the things they relate: so that they cou'd not be *mistaken*. *Mark* was *Peter's* fellow-traveller; and *Luke* was *Paul's*: and therefore must have had information of what they have recorded in their Gospels, from the Apostles themselves, and others who were Eyewitnesses: and in depending upon their testimony, *Mark* and *Luke* cou'd neither be *credulous*, nor *mistaken*. As to the *Acts* of the *Apostles*, which contains the most convincing proofs of the truth of the Gospel, *Luke* who wrote the *Acts*, was probably an eyewitness of most of the things he relates. His testimony is confirm'd * by St. *Paul* himself; who in his *Epistles* mentions several of the Facts recorded in the *Acts*, and *Gospels*.

* 2 Cor. viii.
28.

T. But tho' the Evangelists had been ever so exactly apprized of the truth; is it likely that they who were the Apostles or Disciples of *Jesus*; who had devoted themselves, and their labours, to his service and glory, shou'd not be byass't by their affection to their Master, and their Zeal for promoting his Interest and Honour? When Men list themselves in a Party, we dayly see to what lengths their zeal and partiality lead them; in decrying some; and magnifying others; as their Friendship, Envy, or other Views may sway them. The most upright and worthy Persons are insensibly byass't and prejudiced in such cases. And we cannot doubt but the Evangelists were *men of like passions* and frailties with others; and were as much influenced by party-views, and a concern for the honour of *Jesus*; as we find other Authors are, for the reputation of their Patrons; or for others whose adventures they undertake to record and celebrate.

N. Whatever affection the Evangelists had for *Jesus*, and however great their concern was for his Honour, their Gospels plainly show that they had a greater regard to Truth, than to any other consideration whatever. We find in them the most native simplicity of narration, and a plain, artless, dispassionate account, not only of what makes for the credit and honour of *Jesus*; but of such things too as seemingly tend to his discredit, and disparagement. The Evangelists have so candidly related the many malicious *aspersions* that the *Pharisees*, his bitterest Enemies, cast upon him; and the other *reproaches* by which they endeavour'd to lessen his Character; that there is no reason to suspect they have suppress't any thing that was laid to his charge. The

SECT. VI. truth is they have recorded more of this kind than cou'd have been expected from the utmost impartiality. They tell us that he was reproach't with the meanness of his extraction and employment; his want of Letters, and Education, and *having never learn't*. They freely own his extreme want and poverty; and his being subject to the common infirmitys of human-nature; to excessive *Tenderness*; to seeming *Anger*; and the *fear* of Death. They don't conceal his being *tempted* of the Devil forty days; his *Agony* under the dreadful apprehension of his sufferings; and his complaining, on the Cross, of God's having *forsaken* him. They declare that the *Pharisees* called him a *Sinner*, or wicked Person; and reproach't him with being a breaker of the Sabbath; a *Glutton*, and a *wine-bibber*; an Impostor, or *deceiver* of the people; as one that was *mad*, and *possess't* by the Devil: and in fine, as a Confederate with Devils. The Evangelists not only relate all these things plainly and candidly; but they do not so much as tell us that what the *Jews* laid to the charge of *Jesus*, was false and injurious; which, one wou'd have thought, Truth and Justice required them to do. Their Silence on such occasions is really surprizing. They never say one word in his defence, unless when they relate any discourse of *Jesus* wherein he vindicated himself. They neither commend him; nor censure his *Enemys*: but leave us to collect his true Character from his Doctrine, his Miracles, and his Conduct. I appeal now to any unbyass't Person, whether if a candid *Jew* had composed any of the Gospels, and confined himself to mere Facts, he cou'd have spoken more coldly and indifferently of *Christ*;

or shown less concern for his honour and re-
putation than the Evangelists have done. They
speak of *themselves* too, and the other Apo-
stles, with the same honest impartiality. They
have recorded their low rank in life; and
their very mean Employments: their want of
Faith; their dullness and slowness of appre-
hension in the plainest matters; their gross
Mistakes; their contentions about Superiority;
the * ambitious request of *James* and *John*; the
envy and indignation of the rest against them;
the wicked treachery of *Judas*; *Peter's* shame-
ful denying his Master, with all its aggravat-
ing Circumstances; (which are related by
Mark his particular *Friend*;) the cowardice
of the other Apostles in forsaking him; their
ignorant disbelief of his resurrection at first;
and *Thomas's* obstinate incredulity till he had
all the possible evidence of Sense for his con-
viction. *Luke* too in the *Acts* gives us a very
black (and therefore undoubtedly true) Cha-
racter of his friend *Paul* before his conversion:
and mentions the warm contention and rup-
ture betwixt *Paul*, and *Barnabas*. And the
Apostle generally speaks of himself in such
very humble and abasing terms, as having been
a *Persecuter*, a *Blasphemer*, *injurious* to the Dis-
ciples of *Christ*, and even *unworthy to be called*
an Apostle; that we cannot possibly doubt of
his sincerity in any thing he said or did. The
candid relation of all these things is an incon-
testable proof of the integrity of the Evange-
lists and Apostles. Indeed there is no History
whatever that has half so much intrinsick evi-
dence of its truth and credibility, as we find in
the Holy Scriptures.

SECT. VI.

Mat. ix. 9.

Mar. i. 16,

19.

Mar. iv. 40.

Ch. ix. 32.

Joh. viii. 27.

Mar. ix. 34.

Luk. xxii.

24.

* Mat. xx.

20, 24.

Mar. xiv. 71.

Mat. xxvi.

56.

Luk. xxiv.

37—41.

Joh. xx.

25—28.

Ch. viii. 1, 3.

Ch. ix. 1, 2.

Ch. xv. 39.

1 Tim. i. 13.

1 Cor. i. 27.

28.

1 Cor. xv.

8, 9.

SECT. VI.

W T. Your remarks prove that in the Gospels there are all the *Appearances* of Truth and Candour that can be desired: but might not the Evangelists have artfully affected, and contrived this shew of Sincerity on purpose to gain credit; and to make their testimony appear unquestionable? How can we be sure that they did not design to impose upon the world, by giving a romantick account of things that were never done?

N. Such extravagant suspicions tend to destroy all trust and faith among mankind; and to lead people to the wildest sort of Scepticism. If mean, artless, ignorant Men are to be suspected of a refined policy and the deepest dissimulation, while they give all imaginable proofs of their sincerity and honest meaning; there is an end of all trust and confidence. It must be impossible to distinguish betwixt Integrity, and Falshood in any case. The *strongest* appearances of Candour and Veracity may still be suspected: Human testimony can never be intirely rely'd on. All History may be but Romance: and the only things we can be sure of are those which we see, or feel. I proved fully before that it was morally impossible for *Jesus*, or his Apostles, to be engaged in any Fraud, either in his raising others from the dead; or in his being raised himself on the third day. And the same reasoning is equally applicable to every part of their Conduct. What I then offer'd to your consideration is farther confirm'd by the intrinsick marks of credibility contain'd in the Gospels: and by the external Evidence of their Truth, that arises from the concurring testimony of other * Historians who

* See *Grotius* of the Truth of the Christian Religion: and *The Credibility of the Gospel-History*; by Mr. *Lardner*. relate

relate several of the remarkable Facts that are mention'd, and Events that are *foretold*, in the Gospels. Let me farther remind you that if the Evangelists cou'd be supposed either foolish or wicked enough to *attempt* imposing upon the world, by giving a false account of things in their Gospels, it must have been impossible for them to *succeed* in it : because they cou'd not expect to be believed if they related any thing of moment but what vast numbers of other Christians knew, and believed, and practis'd, as well as the Evangelists themselves. The Doctrine of *Jesus* was preach't and propagated by the Apostles in several Nations, before any of the Gospels were written. Churches were planted in many places ; and united Societys of Believers were form'd. The Lord's day was religiously observed in commemoration of *Christ's* having risen upon the first day of the week : and the Sacraments of Baptism, and the Lord's Supper were dayly administer'd. So that when *Matthew's* Gospel was publish't there were many thousands of christian Converts who had heard *Jesus*, or his Apostles preach ; and had seen their Miracles ; and cou'd easily know whether *that* Gospel contain'd the same doctrine which they had often heard, and those Facts which they had either seen themselves, or heard related by such as were Eyewitnesses of what they declared. These numerous Converts, must certainly have known whether the account that *Matthew's* Gospel gives of the Doctrine and Miracles of *Jesus*, the original institution of the Sacraments, and other religious Usages they observed, was the same that they had often heard from the Apostles. The same Observation may be apply'd to the other three Gospels ; with this

SECT. VI. particular advantage: that after the *first* Gospel was publish't, and approved by the Apostles, the other disciples of *Jesus* had not only their-own personal knowledge of the christian doctrine to depend on; but a *written Standard* of it, with which those who had none of the Apostles among them to consult, cou'd compare the other Gospels that were afterwards publish't; and the more easily distinguish the *genuine*, from the spurious ones that the antient Hereticks compos'd to support their immoral pernicious Errors. So that whether we consider the intrinsick marks of credibility contain'd in the Gospels themselves; or the external Evidence and Attestation given to the truth, and genuine Authority of them, by a vast number of unquestionable Witnesses; and the concurring testimonys of other Historians both Jewish, and Heathen; we have the utmost reason to believe not only that the Gospels, and other Books of the New-Testament were written by the persons whose names they bear; but that they contain a faithful account of the Doctrine of *Jesus*, and of the Miracles, and other Facts which confirm the truth and divine authority of it.

T. I cannot, after all, but think it somewhat surprizing that in the Gospels we shou'd have such a dark perplexing account given us of several of *Jesus's* Miracles, as furnishes too great a handle for Infidels to question the *Miraculousness* of some Facts, and the *Truth* of others. If the Evangelists had really been Eyewitnesses, (or got exact information from others,) of what they relate, they must have told most of the Storys in the Gospels, after a more plausible manner. If they had made a discreet choice of proper Circumstances in relating

lating each fact: if they had added some that they have suppress't; and omitted some use-
 less ones that they have mention'd; their ac-
 counts of things wou'd have been far more
 unexceptionable.

N. However great a paradox it may seem, I cannot but think that those very Circumstances of the Miracles we have examin'd, which Mr. *W.* reckons absurd and incredible, are really convincing proofs of the truth of those Miracles; and of the Sincerity with which the Evangelists have recorded them. If they had chiefly *design'd to aggrandize the fame of Jesus, for a worker of Miracles,* as Mr. *W.* supposes; they cou'd easily have suppress't those Circumstances that furnish him with his Objections; and have added others, that wou'd have made *Jesus's* Miracles appear far more astonishing than many of them do. Had the Evangelists design'd to impose upon the credulity of mankind; and to write a Romance, instead of a true History; they wou'd have told us that several of the *Traders* in the *Temple*, who offer'd to resist *Jesus*, were struck dead, or blind, upon the Spot: that the two thousand *Swine* when driven by the Devils into the Sea, were by *Jesus* brought out alive; and restored to the Owners: that he was *transfigured* in a valley before thousands of people; and that *Moses* and *Elias* went up to Heaven in their sight: that the *Woman* with the *issue of blood* was brought to *Jesus* upon a bed, lying at the point of death: that the *Other* who was *bowed-together* cou'd neither move hand nor foot: that he made a wither'd *Fig-tree* bear ripe fruit in a moment, to relieve his hunger: that he cured all the

SECT. VI. *diseased* at the pool of *Bethesda*, and restored a new leg to the *lame Man*, instead of one that he had lost before : that he gave Sight to the *Man born blind*, in a moment, without touching him : that he came and healed the *Paralytick* at the door of the House : that he created *Wine* without *Water* at *Cana* ; and ordered most of it to be immediately distributed among the poor of the Town. They might have told us that the *Ruler's daughter* had been *bury'd* a week ; and the *Widow's Son* a fortnight : that *Lazarus* was brought out of his Sepulchre ; and that his face was view'd by fifteen *Pharisees*, and five hundred other *Jews*, before he was brought to life : and in fine, that when *Jesus* was crucify'd, all his Apostles were imprisoned till he rose again : or, that after his resurrection, he appear'd dayly to his Disciples, and lived with them, as he used to do : that he walk't publicly about the streets of *Jerusalem* ; was hosanna'd again by the Multitudes : and that he ascended to Heaven in the presence not only of the Chief-priests and Rulers ; but of ten thousand people besides. Such an account of *Jesus* and his Miracles was far more likely to be expected from *Deceivers*, than that we have in the Gospels. Had the Evangelists combined to put a cheat upon the world, we shou'd certainly have had other sorts of Miracles than those they have recorded. There wou'd have been no omission of the greatest and most important Miracles ; no differing accounts of the same Fact ; no perplexing Variety of Circumstances ; nor seeming contradictions in their Gospels : no mention of any sort of means used by *Jesus* ; nor of such Circumstances as seem to lessen the greatness of his Miracles ;

or to render the reality of them doubtful. There wou'd have been an intire and constant harmony among the Gospels, in *every* Point. The Miracles related in them wou'd all have appear'd *unquestionable* and *astonishing*: and there wou'd not have been any handle given for such Objections and Cavils as Mr. *W.* makes at the real Miracles of *Jesus*. But wou'd Infidels have been more apt to believe such *unexceptionable* Narratives? Wou'd they not have had far more reason to question the truth of them, than they have to cavil at the four genuine Gospels we now have? What but the strictest Sincerity cou'd have led the Evangelists to mention those Circumstances of *Jesus's* Miracles that are chiefly objected to? They cou'd not possibly think that they made the Miracles appear the greater. If they reflected at all, they must have been sensible that some of the Circumstances they mention, evidently tend rather to lessen the Miracles they relate; and sometimes to render them doubtful. But they seem to have regarded nothing of this kind. Truth was their Rule; and sincerity their Guide. They wrote what they saw, and heard, and certainly knew: and never troubled themselves to consider what bad use sceptical and ill-disposed Minds wou'd make of their Writings. Truth, Nature, and Veracity appear in all that they say: and I'm perswaded every considerate person will readily agree that those very Circumstances of *Christ's* Miracles which Mr. *W.* finds fault with, render them more credible, than if such Circumstances had not been mention'd. Throughout the debate with Mr. *M.* I showed you that there is not the least absurdity or incredibility in any of those circumstances: but that

SECT. VI. that they are all probable and consistent. And
 I have now farther shown that they are a convincing proof of the integrity of the Evangelists: so that instead of rendering their testimony questionable; these *lessening* circumstances we have consider'd and vindicated, tend above all things to confirm the truth and credibility of the Gospels.

T. Your reasoning is plausible; and your notions hang well together. But I have still some strong objections to propose against the truth and reasonableness of the Christian Religion, as it is represented in your Creeds, and Systems. If you can defend every part of *Jesus's* Doctrine, as well as you have vindicated his Miracles; it is likely I may become your Profelyte. But till you do that, I must retain my sceptical Notions, suspend my Judgment; and believe what I can.

N. I shall always be ready, Sir, to give you all the satisfaction I can, upon any point you may propose. And I don't doubt but I shall be able to convince you that the Christian Doctrine is intirely agreeable to Reason; and that the *reasonableness*, the *perfection*, and the *necessity* of it is such a proof of its divine original, as wou'd alone determin any wise and impartial Judge of things, to prefer it far before any Institution of Religion, or Scheme of Duty, that ever was proposed to the world. But it is now too late to enter upon such an important copious Subject. I'm your humble Servant.

T. Sir, I'm yours.

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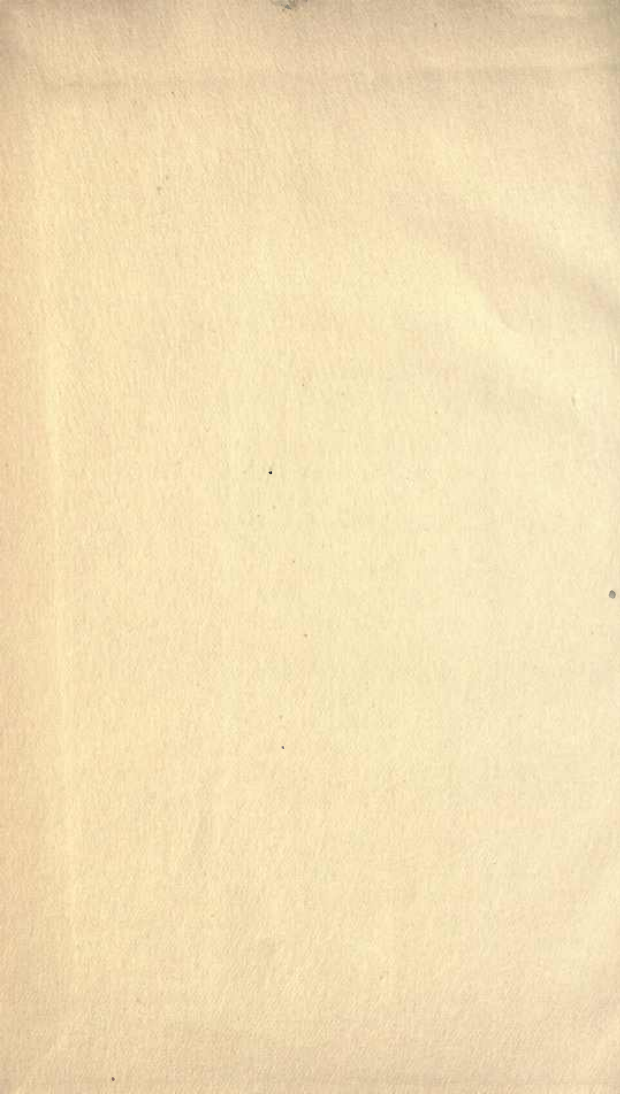
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